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LETTERS

TO THE

DIRECTORS AND PROPRIETORS

OF

EAST-INDIA STOCK,

AND

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE.

*East Indies. Hon Company of merchants
trading to the E. I.*

LONDON:

Printed for J. FIELDING, No. 23, Pater-noster Row.

M.DCC.LXXXII.

L E T T E R

TO THE

DIRECTORS AND PROPRIETORS

EAST-INDIA STOCK:

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486 A.D.



EDMUND BURKE

LONDON

PRINTED FOR THE EAST INDIA COMPANY BY

M. D. C. L. XXXII.

To the Directors and the Proprietors of
East-India Stock.

GENTLEMEN,

I EARNESTLY recommend the following letters to your candid and dispassionate perusal. They are written with no view to party. The question soon to be determined is, Whether you shall tacitly establish a precedent of the most dangerous tendency, or resist it effectually in the first instance. A right honourable Member of the House of Commons, from whom I should have expected more attention to the rights of Englishmen, has told us, that the Court of Proprietors have nothing to do in the removal of Mr. Hastings. Before we consider the very extraordinary merits of our Governor-General, before we know any thing of the man intended to succeed him; let us determine how far a Vote of the House of Commons is to bind us.—Every lawyer in the kingdom, every honest man, will tell us, that a Vote of the House of Commons is not binding upon any chartered Company in this

this kingdom, or indeed upon any individual, their own members excepted. If the Legislature should think proper to deprive us of the services of Mr. Hastings, we must of course submit; but let us not remove such a man ourselves without the clearest conviction of the wisdom and expediency of the measure. — The Swallow packet is fortunately arrived: she will bring in a complete relation of the affair of Benares: she will bring down the transactions in Bengal to the commencement of the present year. Let the dispatches be coolly and considerately read: let Mr. Hastings's merits be impartially considered — let the character of his intended successor be fairly canvassed; and then let us come to a determination upon a point, in which not only our future welfare, but our very existence will depend.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble servant,

An Independent Proprietor.

June 3d, 1782.

LETTERS

LETTERS

TO THE

PROPRIETORS of EAST-INDIA STOCK.

LETTER I.

THE present critical and interesting situation of your affairs, renders it particularly incumbent on every Proprietor of India-stock to attend to the proceedings of Parliament on this important occasion. On the resolutions they are about to take, the prosperity of your affairs abroad, and your existence as a Company, materially depend. In your capacity of English subjects, you have a right to watch the conduct of Parliament, and in that of Proprietors it is your interest to be peculiarly attentive to it. Whilst this right is exercised, and this interest asserted with decency and respect, I have not a doubt of your representations being listened to with attention. The sentiments of some of his Majesty's present ministers, regarding the Company, have been warm in support of their chartered rights, and liberal in professing a desire to free them from the shackles of government: with these assurances, we have every reason to hope they will not adopt any measures that are an invasion of the rights they profess to defend, or an infringement of the freedom they profess to encourage.

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From

LETTER I.

From the resolutions which have been proposed to Parliament by the Chairman of the Select Committee, and from opinions which have been very freely given, it is generally understood that Governor Hastings and the present Supreme Council will be removed. This removal may be effected, according to the act of 1774, by petition to the King from the Court of Directors, or by a new act of Parliament for the reasons to be assigned therein. In either case, the petition or the act will go to the establishing of some delinquency in the parties, or some insufficiency in the appointments. The resolutions of the Secret Committee speak plainly in terms of disapprobation of Mr. Hastings's political conduct; and they revert to matters so far back as the year 1772. What Mr. Hastings's conduct hath been, how much it was at first commended, what attempts were afterwards made to remove him, how they failed, and what honourable support the Proprietors gave him, it is not my present intention to enquire, neither shall I enter into a discussion of his merits, abilities, and experience. What I mean and wish is, to draw the attention of the Proprietors to a preservation of their own rights. When Parliament assert their power of removing the Supreme Council, for reasons which they in their wisdom declare to be insufficient, I listen with profound respect, but not with entire conviction; and since the wisdom, even of Parliament, is fallible, I may be permitted to doubt; but when I am told, they have a right to go a step farther, and appoint what persons they please to fill the stations of the Supreme Council, I hope I may be permitted to ask where is the freedom of the Company, where are its chartered rights, and above all, where is the emancipation from Government?

If Parliament can remove any set of men, and appoint any other, as often as they please, without consulting the Proprietors,

Proprietors, the power of the latter must be annihilated ; and when they have lost the power, I would advise them to relinquish the responsibility ; but if the right of nominating their own servants be yet allowed them, I would then most earnestly entreat them to be very circumspect in the exercise of it. I entreat them to consider the hazardous step, in the first instance, of recalling, at this juncture, so old and able a servant as Mr. Hastings ; and in the second, of sending out a set of men who are strangers to the country, its laws, its manners, its customs, language, and politics. Admitting that some parts of Mr. Hastings's conduct may be exceptionable, are there not many which have received and deserve applause ? His abilities are confessed, even by his enemies, and his integrity they cannot accuse. Will the Proprietors remove such a man ? And is there no medium between censure and dismission ?

If Parliament were to pass an act, as they seem to intend, for the guidance of the Company's government in India, I think one may venture to pronounce, from Mr. Hastings's conduct, in the two first years of his government, that no man would adhere more strictly to their orders. Whilst he enjoyed the confidence of his masters, they never found a more obedient or a more capable servant. When Government interfered, and introduced the unfortunate contests in the Supreme Council, which involved the Directors themselves in party feuds, and when the invisible agency of Ministers served to increase them, intemperate acts and heats were the consequences both at home and abroad ; and in this interval no permanent plan or system was pursued : but since it is the benevolent intention of Parliament to guard against future error from past experience, and to prescribe the mode of governing these distant provinces with the greatest possible advantage to the state, I would submit it to

their consideration, and that of the Proprietors, whether these ends are likely to be answered by sending utter strangers into that country. If the Proprietors should be of opinion, that there are no servants in that country, nor in this, who are worthy of a place in the Supreme Council, and if they think that no set of men can have resided in India without being rendered unfit for such a station, or that the Legislature, with the power to appoint, hath also the power to endue others with knowledge, integrity, abilities, and experience, then let them join in the present measures, and try the fatal experiment of recalling Mr. Hastings.

An INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

April 18, 1783.

LETTER II.

IN a letter I addressed to you a few days ago, I gave my reasons for calling your attention to the present situation of your affairs; and in the hope that my humble labours may not be unacceptable, I shall venture to dedicate them a little longer to your service.

The subject which is now the object of enquiry and deliberation, hath, under different circumstances, engaged the serious consideration of the Proprietors and Parliament near twenty years. It is a subject, however, so difficult to be understood, it hath given rise to so much controversy, and it hath so excited the passions and prejudices of all orders

ders of men, that it is not to be wondered at if many erroneous opinions have been entertained, and some false systems adopted. But since so much argument hath already been urged, and so much reasoning hath already been employed, that the clearest understanding is puzzled, a few facts may, perhaps, impress the mind more forcibly than many arguments. If, also, experience is more sure than theory, and that future effects may be judged of from similar causes which have already occurred, a plain recital of some past occurrences, may, perhaps, lead us to a truer judgment of the subject, than any other mode of investigation.

In the year 1763, your Government of Bengal was engaged in a war with Cossim Ally Khan, and Sujah Dowlah, that threatened the existence of the Company in as great a degree as the present war with Hyder Ally and the Mah-rattas. The politics of the late Mr. Henry Vansittart, were, at that period, as much despised as those of Mr. Hastings are now; and he, who hath since been acknowledged to have borne a most excellent character, was then traduced, aspersed, and reviled with all the rage of party. In 1764, you judged it expedient, for the safety of the Company's possessions, and the reformation of the greatest enormities (as they were then called,) to send out the late Lord Clive, at the head of a Select Committee, with special powers to restore peace, and correct abuses. Upon their arrival in 1765, they found the enemy vanquished, and peace restored; but the work of reformation they represented as one of the labours of Hercules, and compared the settlement of Calcutta to the Augæan stable. There was hardly a term of abuse in the English language, which they did not apply to the servants of that time. At the beginning of 1767, his Lordship had finished the great work of

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reformation, and established the pacific system so much applauded since.

In a very few years after his arrival in England, this truly great man and his colleagues were arraigned by Parliament : and such was the violence of the proceedings, and the temper of those times, that the very man who a few years before had received rewards and praises of the Company, honours from his King, and was stiled the “heaven born General,” was on the point of being stripped of all his laurels, and was reviled as a plunderer and a murderer.—The language he had held to the Court of Directors against their servants, was retorted upon him, and he saw, and confessed the injustice he had done them. In the end he was acquitted ; and we have seen men, in the very same Parliament, who then persecuted him with rigour, and were earnest for his condemnation, now eager to do justice to his memory, and retract their former opinions.

The pacific system, which hath been lately celebrated as the only true one for the interest of the Company, and under which we have been said to prosper, and be affluent, had not been established above four years, when it was found to be so very defective, that an extraordinary and new commission was granted to three Supervisors, with controlling powers over all the settlements. The unfortunate fate of the Aurora prevented our knowing the consequence of this scheme.

In two years after this event, it appeared, the Company were upwards of two millions in debt, and obliged to throw themselves into the hands of government, to prevent a bankruptcy. At this alarming period, Mr. Cartier, one of the best, and most amiable men in the world, was severely censured for drawing bills on the Company, and he and some members of the Council were harshly dismissed.

Mr.

LETTER II.

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Mr. Hastings was then looked up to as the only man who could retrieve your affairs; and for this purpose was sent from your Presidency of Madras to Bengal. He justified your choice; and by a most diligent exertion of his uncommon abilities, he found resources to pay off your enormous debt of two millions and an half, and to restore you from bankruptcy to affluence. He received the warmest thanks of your Directors, and for two years they were lavish in his praise.

In the year 1774 your affairs were again canvassed by Parliament, and an act passed, which put the government of Bengal, and all your settlements on an entire new footing. What the effects of this plan have been, I need not relate! Suffice it to say, that in the present year, 1782, you are again brought before the tribunal of Parliament; and if, as it is said, the present government of Bengal, like all former administrations, are to be reviled and dismissed, you may expect to have three, or five gentlemen sent out, who may have a political existence of as many years: and how long this circulation and change of men and measures may last, or rather, how soon it may put an end to your own existence, is a problem that may, perhaps, be shortly resolved.

I shall take another opportunity to remark upon the facts I have recited, and for the present I shall only observe, that they plainly shew the great difficulty of directing the affairs of a country so very remote, how very fluctuating and uncertain the opinions of men must be on such distant transactions, and that the ministerial plan of 1774 hath been the most pernicious of any which hath yet been tried.

An INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR,

April 20, 1782.

L E T-

LETTER III.

IN my last Letter I gave you a summary detail of your affairs, and the various plans which had been tried for the last twenty years : I therein shewed you, what different opinions had prevailed of the same men at different times, what a variety of means had been pursued for the same end, and how inadequate they had all proved : I then drew one general conclusion, which was, the difficulty of judging of the most proper measures to be adopted for the government of so remote a country ; and I shall now take leave to be more particular in my inference, and endeavour to apply the past examples to the present occasion.

I think the present situation of Bengal may be aptly compared to what it was in the year 1764, when the late Lord Clive and his Select Committee were sent out to restore peace and correct abuses. A dangerous and expensive war was just concluded at that time, and the peace they went out to make, they found established on their arrival. From the last advices by the way of Bussorah we are informed, hostilities had virtually ceased between the Mahrattas and General Goddard ; that Mhadajee Scinda had concluded a treaty, and was going with Mr. Anderson to negotiate a general peace at Poonah ; that the Nizam and Mhoodajee Bhooslah had also become mediators ; and that Sir Eyre Coote had obliged Hyder to retire from the Carnatic. If, to this account, we add the arrival of the reinforcement from Europe, I hope I shall not be thought too sanguine, or to force the comparison I mean to make, if I say, it is more than probable that the persons, who are to

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be sent into the Supreme Council at Bengal, will, as Lord Clive did, find it in perfect tranquillity. In this case, they will, like their predecessors, turn their thoughts to the more arduous task of reformation ; and, like them, they will paint a gloomy picture of your distress. They will tell you, they found the country drained of all its wealth, its revenues ruined by the iron hand of rapacious collectors, the mode of collections defective in all its parts, the administration of justice totally corrupt, the servants of the Company sunk into luxury and dissipation, and that hydra, corruption, rearing his seven, or fifty heads, as they may be in the humour to paint him.

To restore a country from so deplorable a state as this requires no common talents, and you may again be told, as you have already been informed, with a very becoming modesty in the men who drew their own characters, " that a degree of virtue and ability, not to be found in common men, must be exerted in this arduous task." The next consideration is, where are men to be found of this description, and by whom are they to be chosen ? Parliament will tell you, — not in your service ; they are all too much tainted with the principles of their education there, and too much concerned in the abuses which are to be corrected, to be trusted with such power. No ! Men of these rare virtues are to be found only in the incorrupt legislature of this kingdom ; and, after they have been duly qualified, by being members of a Select or Secret Committee on India affairs for a session or two, they will then have put on the whole armour of knowledge and virtue, and will be completely equipped for the combat of reformation. They will tell you also, the wild schemes of conquest and ambition are as repugnant to your true interests as the corrupt plans of peculation ; these, therefore, must be carefully

provided against, and the illustrious characters of Rustam and Effendi must now be held up as objects of horror, not as examples of imitation ; and, if there be any foundation for the rumour which is gone abroad, we shall have reason to acknowledge the paternal care of Parliament, in this respect at least, by the persons who are supposed to be the objects of its choice, except indeed, in the instance of the noble General, who has acquired a fame as immortal as those celebrated warriors by his indefatigable labours.

After these gentlemen have resided as long as is requisite for the great business of the public and themselves, and have rung the same changes upon abuses, reformation, corruption, and depravity, with their innumerable train of evils, and when they can with truth assure you, that, by their unremitting endeavours, the very reverse of this destructive system hath been established ; they will return to their native land full of honours, though not of riches, in expectation of a peaceable enjoyment of the moderate income they have hardly earned by a painful industry. But behold the ingratitude and sickleness of a nation they have so honourably and faithfully served ! They find committees of the House, both secret and select, sitting in judgement upon, and condemning that conduct which, in their own ideas, merited so much applause ; and if Mr. Hastings doth not carry his notions of integrity too far, and will not scruple to obtain a seat in that House at the expence of a moral and political obligation, they may, perhaps, find him in one of the places they had left.

From the facts I have already stated of the former conduct of gentlemen upon precisely similar occasions, I do not think that this is an unnatural picture, or a forced conclusion. But let us turn from this to another object, perhaps more worthy of your consideration, namely, your right

right to make a choice of your own servants, and that emancipation which is to form a part of the general reformation, the present ministers have so generously promised, and so honourably begun. If Parliament will both dismiss and appoint the servants who are to govern your affairs, and the Lords of the Treasury are to regulate the orders of your Directors to those servants, in what does your freedom consist? If you are told that your interests are inseparable from the nation's, and that it is their duty to watch over this valuable part of the empire in this manner. I have only to reply, that this argument proves the Company are not free in the sense they ought to be. But if the present ministers mean fairly, meet them fairly upon liberal grounds. Let there be no clandestine negotiations with Lords of the Treasury and their Secretaries, but assert to the Legislature what you deem to be your rights. Bring it to this short issue, that you think you ought to have the power of appointing and dismissing your own servants, and that their proper line of duty to the nation, is, their own excellent idea of giving a general outline for the plan of government, and of controuling the conduct of the Court of Directors by Committees of Parliament. Let the Proprietors treat with Parliament upon enlarged ideas, and on terms worthy of men, who have one common good in view. On these principles let them ask whether they are to have the actual appointment of their own servants, and the real conduct of their own affairs, without any other interference of Parliament than the general super-intending controul of their Committees. If the answer be as candid as the question is fair, you can have no doubt of what is then your duty. If the right be granted, a proper exercise of it is your first object; if it be denied, your next is, to reject the responsibility.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

LETTER IV.

UPON the idea that Parliament mean not to restrict their enquiries merely to what they may think wrong in the conduct of Mr. Hastings, and from any past errors to prescribe such rules for a future Governor as they may think right, but that they will accompany their censure with dismission, and proceed even to new appointments, I have presumed to hint an opinion that such resolutions will affect your chartered rights. Pursuing the same idea, I will venture a little farther into the subject.

Some of the present ministers have been free to declare, that the act of 1774 infringed your ancient constitution, and all agree, that your affairs have not been better conducted since the intercession of Parliament. I have already said, that Parliament act consistently with their professions, and take the true line of power and duty, when they inspect the conduct of your Directors, and regulate the political rules by which they would have your servants guided ; but that, when they step beyond this line, and deprive you of the right of appointing your own servants, they break in upon the regularity of the system, and destroy the harmony of its parts. If Parliament should say that they do this, because you are not capable of conducting your own affairs, that you have no servants worthy of such a trust, and that therefore they make these appointments to preserve this valuable part of the empire to the nation ; we should, in this instance, applaud their wisdom, as in all, we obey their power ; but on a review of the past appointments, we cannot suppose these to have been their

NOTHING IN THIS LETTER IS AN INDICATION OF MY OPINION.

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motives. In 1774, they appointed two of your old servants; to these they added two general officers and a clerk in the War-office. In 1776, they gave you a linen-draper, and in 1781, you were furnished with a purser's clerk, and a director. Hath your interest been consulted in these appointments? Or hath your affairs been entrusted to better hands than you could have found in the line of your service? I think I may safely answer in the negative.

Amongst the exclusive rights and privileges of your character, none, in my humble opinion, is more essential to the good government of your affairs than the appointment of your own servants. It is on a proper choice of them that your welfare materially depends; for on their conduct you must rely, and to them much must be trusted. The appointments in the Supreme Council ought to be looked up to by your servants, as the greatest reward, as dismission is certainly the greatest punishment; and since rewards and punishments are the two great hinges on which all governments turn, that system must be radically defective which is deprived of them. It is to the power, who confers the honour and can inflict the disgrace to which men naturally look in the first instance, consequently the intermediate body is considered only in an inferior or secondary degree; and whether this may not induce the Directors to think more lightly of their responsibility, and the servants less respectfully of the Directors authority, is a matter worthy your serious consideration. At all events it is an irregular and unnatural system that you should have an exclusive right to the management and trade of those countries, and that the first officers in them should be independent of your choice or censure. The pernicious effects of this system you are labouring under at this instant, and yet it is said, it is still to be continued.

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LETTER IV.

If we are to believe an opinion which is very prevalent, and I confess my humble connections do not admit of my obtaining better authority than public report; the candidates for the station of Governor-General are General Smith and Mr. Francis. As you must in this case be deprived of Mr. Hastings's service for one of these gentlemen, it will be very proper for you to consider their different merits and qualifications, as they appear either on your records, or in those situations of life in which they have come under your observation, in order that you may judge wherein you are likely to be benefited by the change.

General Smith was originally an officer in your service on the coast of Coromandel, where he served with reputation, under those able Generals, Laurence, Clive, Coote, Monson, and Caillaud; he returned to England in 1762, with the rank of Major. Many of us recollect those circumstances, when party ran high in Leadenhall-street in 1763 and 1764, which induced the late Lord Clive to procure him the rank of Colonel in the King's service, and the post of second in command in Bengal. He arrived there in May, 1765. He commanded an army of observation in 1766. In 1767, he was promoted to the command of the army and third member of the Council and Select Committee; until the latter end of 1769, he resided chiefly out of your provinces at Allahabad. In the month of December, that year, he returned to England, and if report be true, with treble the fortune that Mr. Hastings now has, after more than thirty years service, and ten of these, Governor of Bengal.

Mr. Francis was forced upon you, and taken from a very humble line of life to be placed in the conspicuous station of a Supreme Counsellor; and from the peculiar circumstances of the times, and the bent of his talents, he was

more

more than a "silent senator." His pen was not of less use than his casting voice to the gentlemen whose plans he defended by the former, and whose measures were carried by the latter. Endued with a quick apprehension, and abilities rather sprightly than solid, assisted by the knowledge of others in the revenues, and happy in his manner of dressing the materials with which he was furnished, he hath gained a reputation for knowledge more specious than real.

Mr. Hastings hath been bred from a very early period of life in your service. To great abilities and a perfect knowledge of the language, laws, customs and manners of the people of India, is joined an experience of upwards of thirty years. He hath been tried in every rank and station in your service, and in all he hath given undoubted proofs of an unshaken integrity. He restored your affairs from the lowest ebb to their highest grandeur. He hath raised larger revenues, found more resources, opened more channels of trade, and sent home larger investments than any of his predecessors. To his great exertion, and that decisive conduct which marks the man of genius, are you greatly indebted for the safety of the Carnatic. The plan of relief, so ably executed by that complete General, Sir Eyre Coote, was proposed by Mr. Hastings, and carried into effect by his casting voice.

This is a very summary, perhaps imperfect sketch of the public characters of these gentlemen, and I may not probably have done justice to the merits of any of them; indeed my only aim, in what I have said, is to induce you to examine more thoroughly into the pretensions of each, that if the decision be left to you, you may make it with propriety.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

L E T-

LETTER V.

THERE are some material points I have only hinted at in my former Letters, which, as they deserve your most particular attention, may not be unworthy of a farther discussion. The first is, that you should endeavour, by every possible means, to re-establish yourselves and your service, upon that independent footing, to which your charters give you the fairest claim. The next is, that you should revert to your true constitutional plan, of promoting your own servants to those honours, which ought to be the reward of faithful services.

I have explained myself so freely, in regard to the controlling power of Parliament, and to what line that power should limit itself, that I hope my meaning cannot be mistaken in the expression of — independent footing ; but lest any doubt should remain, I will be still more explicit, and say, that footing on which you conducted your affairs, before Parliament appointed a Supreme Council and a Supreme Court of Judicature, and before Ministers made patronage in the east a supplement to that of the west. If we may be allowed to judge from experience, your original plan was certainly the best ; for since the interference of the one, and the influence of the other, your councils have been distracted abroad, your Directors divided at home, and your whole service falling to decay.

In considering the next point of promoting your own servants, I am naturally led to the subject I touched upon in my last Letter, regarding a proper choice of persons to fill the important stations in your Supreme Council ; and conformably

formably to those principles on which I ground my own opinion, and presume to offer it to you, I would reject Mr. Francis's offers to return to Bengal, because he was not bred in your service. I hope both Parliament and ourselves will have too much liberality to make invidious comparisons of talents or of principles; but giving Mr. Francis full credit for his share of both, I am sure he will not suffer in either, if I declare my opinion, that you have servants not at all inferior to him in these respects; and his having been once forced into your service, can surely never be made a plea for the same injustice.

The removal of Mr. Hastings, and particularly at this juncture, is another point at which I have hinted; but it is in my humble opinion, a subject of so much importance, and involves so many consequences, that I do seriously hope, when Parliament consider the services *he hath performed*, the abilities *he hath displayed*, and the proofs *he hath given* of uncorrupt conduct and spotless integrity, they will not deprive the Company of the benefit of these abilities, and this integrity, for what they may deem errors in judgment, or because his politics have proved rather unfortunate in the event than unwise in the plan.

But if political errors are to be alledged as reasons for the removal of Mr. Hastings, they ought, in fairness of argument, to be equally cogent against the appointment of any other person who may have fallen into them; and by the same parity of reasoning, it may be asked, whether General Smith adopted a wise policy, in keeping a brigade at Allahabad, and depriving the provinces, by its being paid out of them, of 300,000l. of circulating specie annually? Whether it was a prudent measure to have advised a deputation in 1768, to the Vizier, which was expensive and useless, and whether it was judicious to have proposed a plan for

opening the Company's Treasury, which reduced them to bankruptcy, and for only consenting to which, the virtuous Mr. Cartier was dismissed your service.

The peculiar hardship of Mr. Hastings's situation, calls for more than common candour from Parliament and the Proprietors. He is tried by the severest test which can be applied, and under such circumstances as hardly any conduct can escape from censure. Judgment hath been passed on the success of his measures, not on the wisdom of their design. Plans, which were ably formed, have been condemned, because they were weakly executed. He is arraigned at a tribunal, where he cannot plead his own cause, and to which his most inveterate enemy hath been admitted as a principal witness.

When the mind hath been long intent upon one subject, it is liable to be heated by its own reasonings, and a false glare will sometimes dazzle the clearest understanding; one train of ideas is often pursued with an eagerness that excludes any other, and our utmost caution will not always guard us against prejudice. To some such cause, or to some imperfection of our nature, must we attribute an inference in the last Report of the Select Committee, that imputes to Mr. Hastings his being accessory to the prosecution of Nundcomar, at a time when he had brought an accusation against him. I will be bold to say, that if the gentlemen of the Committee will take the pains to sift that matter thoroughly, they will be convinced Mr. Hastings was not only ignorant of the apprehending of Nundcomar, but that his conduct would then, as it will now, stand the severest examination; and, as a proof that Mr. Hastings had nothing to fear from that accusation, which it is insinuated he shrunk from, *the very same charge* was afterwards renewed to *the very same Council*, and a particular committee appointed by them,

them, consisting of Messrs. Maxwell, Anderson, and Grant, to examine into this affair. Their commission lasted some months, and, after the most minute investigation, it appeared, there was not the least foundation for the charge. This is a matter of fact, capable of instant proof, for the Diary of their proceedings is, or ought to be, amongst the records of the India House. It is much to be lamented, that, where facts were to be established, insinuations should have been resorted to, and the gentlemen would have done well to consider, that if any of them should apply to fill those stations their reports tend to vacate, how forcibly the argument of inference may be retorted upon them.

I have been led to make this remark on a paragraph of the Report of the Select Committee, because, when I am contending for the character of Mr. Hastings, and recommending him to your protection, I am unwilling that an impression should remain on your minds to his prejudice, which it is in my power to remove; and I am confident, from the characters of the gentlemen of the Committee, that they will be equally glad with yourselves to have any point cleared up, which may affect the character of an individual, whose conduct may be the object of their enquiry.

An INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

LETTER VI.

IN the letters I have hitherto troubled you with, I have endeavoured to draw your attention to the preservation of your own rights, and to induce you to turn your thoughts

to the appointment of a proper person to be your Governor General. If I should have been fortunate enough to have suggested any hint that may be useful, or started any idea that may be improved by your better judgment, I shall have answered every purpose that the principles on which I have written, prompted me to hope for. But the temper of the present times, is, perhaps, too violent for an appeal to calm reason. I see, and dread the powerful effects of eloquence urged to its utmost exertions, by a heated imagination. The passions are again roused, and the stream of prejudice, which had either slackened or been diverted into other channels, now returns with redoubled force. Your servants in India can do nothing right. Their wars are plans of thunder; their treaties are compacts of injustice; and themselves monsters of iniquity. These are the topics on which declamation delights to indulge; a thousand causes contribute to their being listened to with applause; and if one instance be found to justify a particular stigma, the principle becomes general, and the conclusion is applied to all. To such lengths hath this indiscriminating spirit proceeded, that political conduct hath been tried by the test of moral rectitude, and claims, which originated in conquest, are to be reconciled to equity. If systems like these were adopted by the speculative moralist, and supported by ingenious reasoning, the novelty would not be much to be wondered at; and the arguments might serve to amuse, though they did not convince: But when these sentiments are carried into practical life, I fear the world is not refined enough to adopt them; and however right we might be in our principles, it is much to be apprehended the consequences would be fatal. Let us only suppose the moral plan to be put into execution, and orders to be given that as it was the greatest degree of injustice to withhold the

Mogul's

Mogul's tribute, the arrears shall be paid him to the present time; that, as it was equally wrong to deprive him of the provinces of Corah and Allahabad, they shall be immediately made over to the Mahratta Chief, to whom his Majesty granted a phirman for their possession; that the arrears of Chout, which have been unjustly withheld from the Mahrattas, be paid as soon as possible the state of the treasury will admit, and that in the mean time, the provision of goods for Europe be prohibited, in order to afford a larger proportion of the revenues to liquidate this just claim.

There are several other demands, which, according to this moral reformation, would require a similar adjustment; but these instances may, perhaps, be sufficient to evince that, as moral virtue neither is, nor can be always practised in affairs of government, so it is unreasonable to make it the standard for political transactions. Without suffering ourselves to be deceived by the speculative arguments of ingenious men, and without misleading ourselves by a vain expectation of more virtue than is practised in human affairs, let us endeavour to seek that good which is attainable, and to establish that rectitude which is practicable. Let some consistent plan be formed, applicable to the manners, customs, and religion of the people, for whom it is intended; commit the execution of that plan to your servants, and punish them if they disobey it. But if you are neither to form your own plans, nor have the controul of your own servants; if laws are to be forced upon you, that annihilate the powers of your government, and alienate the minds of the people you are to govern; if a system, composed of jarring elements, is intruded upon you, how is it possible your servants should act without offending the law or betraying your interest? A more distressful dilemma cannot be

be conceived, and we have a striking proof, that a laudable endeavour to compose the inevitable strife of opposite contentions, is likely to be punished as a criminal action.

With all these proofs of hypothetical reasoning, let us not recur to it again. Let us endeavour to avail ourselves of the aid of common sense and the benefit of experience. Let us try whether the abilities which have proved useful to us in time of need, may not be so again. Let us appeal to facts, and not to theory. Whether the Mahratta war was justifiable or not, and whether the Court of Directors, or the Council of Bombay were right in their politics, is now a matter of speculation; and the fact I would appeal to is, whether in the present situation, you can find a man so capable of supporting your drooping interests as Mr. Hastings? I believe it is a fact, which will not be disputed, that he hath found more resources to assist your armies than any other man, and that he is now looked up to by the Presidency of Madras and Sir Eyre Coote, as the most capable person of preserving your power in India. It will be very difficult to transfuse the ideas of a British House of Commons into the natives of Asia; and an act, that seems wise to the enlightened understanding of the former, may have a contrary effect on the contracted minds of the latter; hence, however proper the legislature may think it to remove Mr. Hastings, be assured the consequence will be the very reverse of what they intend; for in whatever light his conduct may be seen here, it is very certain the Indian powers behold it with admiration and respect; and however ludicrous the names of Rustum and Effendi, may sound in England, most assuredly the comparison does not convey a ridiculous idea to a native of Indostan.

Ambition and conquest, rapacity and injustice, are inexhaustible themes for oratorial powers; and, in the present disposition

disposition of men's minds, such charges are admitted on the bare authority of an eloquent speaker; but we, who ought to look to consequences, and carefully to examine the truth of premises, should not be seduced by the charms of eloquence, or biased by the influence of prejudice. Our surest guide is experience, and whilst we have facts to appeal to, let us not have recourse to supposition. Is your present Governor-General a rapacious man? his moderate fortune acquits him of such an imputation. Hath any corrupt motive ever been attributed to him, which hath not been fully confuted when it was fairly brought forward? Witness the accusation of Nundcomar, of which I spoke in my last letter. Have not his abilities been proved to you in various instances, and hath not he, on some important occasions, rescued you from distress? Witness the affluence he restored you to, when he first became your Governor, and his late exertions on the invasion of the Carnatic. Is there a potentate in India who doth not reverence Mr. Hastings? And did not the *Nizam* profess an implicit confidence in him, at a time that he had none in any of your other Presidencies? In short, there are so many proofs of Mr. Hastings being possessed of such rare virtues, and such extraordinary abilities, and of his being so universally respected by all the powers in India, that the consequence of recalling him, at this time, may be fatal to your affairs.

An INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR,

LETTER VII.

I Can easily conceive that Mr. Hastings's late miraculous escape from assassination should be an unpardonable crime in the eyes of his thwarted competitors; but wherein he should

should be liable to censure for his part in those resolutions of the Supreme Council, which are supposed to have provoked the diabolical attack, is, I must own, far beyond the stretch of my sagacity.

The motives which led this deed of horror, as far at least as conjecture can trace them, are undisputed to have arisen from a demand made by the Governor General and Supreme Council, on Raja Cheyt Sing, a dependant and tributary Zemindar, for a trifling addition to his annual rent, in support of three battalions of seapoys, during the continuance of the war with France. The several opinions and unanimous votes of the Supreme Council on this subject may be found in the Appendix to the Sixth Report of the Committee of Secrecy; and to those authentic documents I refer, in proof of so much of the following concise narrative as relates to the right, the cause, and the extent of the demand in question. The publication of that Appendix will, I hope, silence those malicious misrepresentations which have hitherto designedly misled the public.

The districts of Gazypore and Benares are a portion of the Subah of Illahabad, and border on our province of Bahar. They produce an annual revenue of more than seventy lacks of rupees, from very low rents, and paid a tribute of twenty-four lacks yearly to the late Nabob, Vizier of Oud, Sujahud Doula; and it also appears from the evidence given by Captain Harper to the Select Committee, that they furnished a body of troops whenever the Vizier took the field, according to the established constitution of the Mogul empire. The sovereignty of those districts, with all its rights and revenues, was ceded to our Company in 1775, by the present Nabob Vizier, Asof-ud-Doula. A sunnud and cabooliet were executed in the usual form, between the Supreme Council and Raja Cheyt Sing,

Sing, the Zemindar, by which he was bound to pay the same tribute he had hitherto furnished to the Nabob Vizier.

As from that moment the districts of Gazypore, &c. became united and incorporated with the rest of the British dominions in that part of India, the Governor-General produced in Council a proposition for reducing Cheyt Sing's irregular, undisciplined and unnecessary troops, by adding a certain portion of them to our own army, to be paid, however, by him. It has always been a point of policy with the Company to discourage, and to prohibit, if possible, the maintenance of independent forces by any of the Indian powers under our protection. The Nabob of Bengal has none; the Nabob of Arcot has been frequently intreated, and at last with effect, to diminish his military establishment; and the connivance to useless and dangerous bodies of troops, kept up by the Rajahs of some of the northern circars, forms a strong article amongst the objections made by the Court of Directors to the late Governor and Council of Madras. No political necessity, no stipulated exception, entitled Rajah Cheyt Sing to the peculiar privilege of a separate army; nor was there any doubt of our right as well as power; as sovereigns, to enforce the measure recommended by the Governor-General, and it was over-ruled by the majority, merely on the plea of a compliment to the Rajah's desires.

In 1778, in consequence of the French war, our military establishment in Bengal being greatly increased, it was proposed in Council (and unanimously carried) to call on Cheyt Sing for some additional aid towards the support of the very extraordinary expences of the state; and it was expressly signified to him, that it was to continue during the war only. This, in fact, was nothing more than a modification of the Governor-General's original proposition on our first accession to the sovereignty of Cheyt Sing's

provinces, and which in time of profound peace it had not been thought necessary to enforce. The required addition was now very small ; five lacks of rupees, and was appropriated to the payment of three battalions of seapoys, with European officers. The propriety and justice, as well as necessity of this measure, immediately secured it the sanction of the Court of Directors.

Hindoos are known to have a natural propensity to hoarding, and Cheyt Sing possesses ample means for the gratification of this darling passion. It is notorious that he has saved at least thirty lacks every year since he succeeded to the Zemindary, and including his father's treasure, is supposed to keep locked up from circulation upwards of four millions sterling in specie.

Benares is now the richest city in India ; a holy asylum, sanctified by the strongest religious prejudices, and a crowded seminary of Indian literature. An almost imperceptible tax on its inhabitants, or the most trivial increase in the very low rents of the province, would have doubled our new demand : a proportionate reduction of the Rajah's useless troops would have answered the end, without any innovation whatever. Yet this avaricious wretch had the assurance to plead absolute inability, and to pretend a necessity of selling his very furniture to pay the first year's quota ; that of the second year he resolutely withheld, till extorted by threats of instant compulsion. Pretexts of poverty are seldom attended to by Indian governments, unless on manifest grounds : as these are become the ordinary and universal preliminaries to every payment from every debtor ; and hence it is that no revenues are ever realized without the assistance of an armed force. But those pretexts were peculiarly scandalous in the mouth of the richest inhabitant of Hindostan. The war has now continued four years,

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and Cheyt Sing has probably paid twenty lacks of rupees on the whole (exclusive of his tribute) that is to say, two thirds of the savings of one year's rent ; while the whole revenues of Bengal have been unavoidably mortgaged for the same state-necessity.

If this transaction be not within the line of reason, of justice, and of right : if any criminality whatever can be ascribed to the first proposers of it, there is no possible system of politics, no one act of any government, that can escape the ordeal. If neither the unanimity of a Council, which was hardly ever unanimous on any other point ; if the full approbation of the Court of Directors, whose immediate province it was to decide ; if the certainty of an inherent right existing in the Mogul Government, and proof positive from Captain Harper, of the actual exercise of that right ; if the solemn cession of the sovereignty, with all its appendages, and the strong urgency of political necessity, will *not* altogether authorize the Company and the Company's servants to enforce so inconsiderable a demand on one of their acknowledged subjects, what will ?

Good God ! shall the commonest of all the common acts of government, the necessary provision of ways and means be termed a *robbery* ? Shall the ruling power over twelve millions of people be arraigned in public, or calumniated in private, for impartially sharing among the several members of the state, that burthen which must unavoidably be borne some how by the whole ? These are canons of justice, under which an angel could not be safe. But it should seem, that this new doctrine of robbery has already reached Benares ; and that Cheyt Sing has, in consequence, conceived he might resist, or destroy the Governor-General of Bengal, with as little ceremony as he would a highwayman or a mad dog. Pardon the expression, I meant not to

be jocular. The subject is much too serious and too alarming. Such a deliberate conspiracy for assassinating a Governor and all his suite, while passing on affairs of political importance, through provinces immediately subjected to his authority ! and that for so trifling a consideration as fifty thousand pounds to a man worth near five millions ? It is impossible. Human nature revolts at the idea.

There must have been some concealed purposes of iniquity to be served ; some pernicious damned suggestions must have poisoned his mind, and urged him to this temporary frenzy. Some deep complotting *Iago* has, by exaggerated powers of lies, laid the foundation for this desperate act, and hood-winked the miserable perpetrator, or he never could have been so blind to his own interest, to the little chance of success, and the impossible of impunity. He never could otherwise have forgotten the consequences of the unhappy massacre in his very neighbourhood at Patna.

He has probably, by this time, seen his folly as well as his guilt : I wish he may have found his tongue.

In the mean while, I must intreat the favour of those gentlemen, who can stile the temporary and necessary increase of Cheyt Sing's tribute a *robbery*, to furnish me with a term for this horrid attempt. I cannot trace even in idea, its enormous advance of criminality. I should be glad too, that they would suggest a proportionate punishment, for I know not to what criminal jurisdiction Cheyt Sing may be amenable. I can only guess what process his late Sovereign Shujah-ud-Doula would have followed on the occasion ; and, I fear, that may seem too severe to many British inquisitors.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

L E T-

LETTER VIII.

IT scarcely ever happens that, in any subject of controversy, the original argument is strictly adhered to. Plain questions of right and wrong are often puzzled by subtlety and sophistry, till the mind knows not on which to decide. Art, prompted by interest, frequently conceals a simple truth, which common sense and common honesty would easily discover; and, in almost every debate, some artifice is practised by the contending parties. On subjects which affect the passions and interests of mankind, it is hardly possible to guard the mind from error and prejudice, or to prevent these disingenuous methods of dispute. Perhaps no subject was ever agitated in which the passions, prejudices, and interests of men were more excited, or concerned, than that of your government, and the conduct of your servants in India. It was not, therefore, to be expected that a committee of the House of Commons should be composed of men of such equal tempers, as to be exempted from the common failings of their nature, or that some of these effects should not be felt, in the course of a long enquiry.

From some late proceedings of the Select Committee, it appears, the great original design of their institution hath been departed from, and that their enquiry hath become more personal than was intended by the House, or even by themselves; and it is much to be apprehended, that if they recede from general principles to particular instances, they may at last descend to party spirit, and personal considerations. To warn them of the danger of partiality might, perhaps, be deemed presumption; but it is certainly my duty

duty to guard you against the consequences of preposition.

In the first report, an inference is drawn from the evidence of some witness, which wounds the honour of Mr. Hastings in the nicest part, and which, however warrantable from the evidence before them, is certainly unjust in point of fact. It hath already been very plainly proved, that Mr. Hastings was neither privy, nor accessory to the prosecution of Nundcomar; and I again repeat, that the *very same charge*, which he exhibits, was produced before the *very same Council*, that it was examined into by a special commission of *their* own appointment, that it was found to be false, and that the diary of these proceedings are amongst the records of the India House. This report was made two months ago, and it was the evidence, which had *then*, that the inference was drawn; the Committee are now examining witnesses, to prove the truth of this insinuation; but I should apprehend, you and all the world will agree, that the justice of this inference must stand, or fall, upon the evidence which was given at *that time*, and that an assertion, which is founded on the proof of a *prior act*, cannot be justified by a *subsequent declaration*. But since Mr. Hastings's character is *again* to appear at your tribunal, for acts which *have been* examined into, and of which he *bath been* most honourably acquitted, it is necessary you should be reminded of what has passed, as well as be informed by whom he is now accused.

The person whom the Committee have lately examined relative to this affair of Nundcomar, is a Mr. C—— G. who came a writer into your service in 1763, left it with a large fortune in 1767, and returned to it in 1774. This gentleman was the very man, who was appointed by General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, to seize

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on all the household papers and accounts of the Nabob from the year 1764 to 1772, in order that they might be delivered to Messrs. Maxwell, Anderson, and Grant, for examination; as, from these papers, the identical charge now alluded to, and brought against Mr. Hastings by Nundcomar, was to be established. He was directed to dismiss the Nabob's mother from the office of regent, which she held under the sanction of the orders of the Court of Directors; he was empowered to remove her house and family, in gross violation of the Oriental manners and customs; he was furnished with a military force to compel obedience to his orders; and he was authorized to seize, and confine any of the household, who might require such treatment. Armed with these extraordinary powers, he proceeded to the Nabob's palace, surrounded it with guards, and seized and confined the Begum's* principal eunuch, her confidential servant and chief adviser. After having executed his orders in the most rigorous manner, after having tried every art to induce the Begum to accuse Mr. Hastings, and after every exertion of power and influence to criminate the Governor-General, nothing could be proved to his dishonour, nor was his integrity in the smallest degree impeached.

Notwithstanding the notoriety of these facts, the length of time which hath elapsed, and that both you and your Directors have honourably acquitted the Governor-General of these very charges, yet hath Mr. G—— intruded upon the public a renewal of that unjustifiable abuse, which was a disgrace to the men who first bestowed it on the character of Mr. Hastings: a character, fortunately for himself, free from every stain of corruption, and, happily for his friends, such as they can stand forth to justify with credit and satisfaction.

* Title of the Nabob's mother.

LETTER VIII.

saction. At such a time as this, when the stream of prejudice runs strong against all orders of men who have been in India, the evidence of Mr. G—— might have been believed, if he had not luckily discovered a trait of his character, which must discredit it, even with partiality itself. He produced several sealed papers to the Committee, which, he assured them, had never been opened, and which, he informed them, he had not delivered to the Council, because he should have incurred the general odium of the settlement by such a discovery. He got possession of this paper by virtue of the power which the Council had given him to seize on all the Nabob's accounts; consequently, it was his duty to have delivered it to them. As to incurring the general odium of the settlement by such a discovery, this cannot be the true motive of concealment, for he had done this long before by his conduct.

An INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

On the view being taken of the present analogy between our views and those of your Highness, I have thought it best to bring you out the circumstances of concealing the paper to the Committee, and of leaving it in the hands of the Council. I hope

LETTER IX.

THE result of the enquiry of the Secret Committee hath been an object of anxious expectation; and as the resolutions to be formed on their report were likely to affect your rights at home and your affairs abroad, I have endeavoured to draw your attention to a subject, in which your interests are so essentially concerned.

Hitherto, we could only reason on circumstances, as they occasionally happened; and in their progressive course, we could

could only judge of their probable event. The enquiry hath now ended, the consequence is known, and the whole subject is fully before us. Let us consider it, for it greatly behoves us so to do, with strict attention and calm deliberation : let us divest ourselves, if possible, of prejudice, of passion, and partiality ; let us not pin our faith upon the opinion of others, but form a judgment of our own ; and let us convince the legislature, that we are capable both of understanding, and conducting our own affairs.

It hath already been made very clear, that the Secret and Select Committees have been inclined to coalesce in their votes of personal censure, and the nature of their appointments ; and, notwithstanding the subjects of enquiry were so totally opposite, that it was not to be imagined their resolutions could possibly tend to the same point, yet it is now pretty plain, a similar end hath been pursued, although the means were apparently different ; and this end seems to be *the removal of Mr. Hastings* ; at least he is the principal figure in the piece, and therefore I shall take leave to consider him as the chief object in what relates to Bengal.

I do not believe that more pains were ever taken to depreciate a character, than have been used against Mr. Hastings, from the arrival in Bengal of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, in the year 1774, until the present month of May, 1782, when Mr. Goring again appeared as his accuser, and was intruded on the Select Committee to bring forward a charge which hath been refuted these five years. The three gentlemen above-mentioned declared, "there was no species of peculation, of which the Governor-General had not been guilty ;" and they exerted all the influence of power to fix some charge upon him. He hath lately been represented as the abettor of what hath been called, a legal murder ; and he hath been charged

with having corrupted the integrity of a Judge. These are accusations of so heinous a nature, that could they have been justified, in any degree, Mr. Hastings would not have been the object of envy he now is. But happily for himself, his conduct hath been so free from all corruption, "he hath been so clear in his great office," that his merits plead for him in the strongest manner, and he now appears at your tribunal with an unblemished character; nor has all the influence of power, the rage of party, or the malice of his enemies, been able to bring the shadow of a proof to impeach his integrity.

The Secret Committee were so far from thinking his conduct had been influenced by interested views, that they expunged the term which conveyed so unjust an idea; and so far from being censured for dishonourable motives, that the resolutions of the House, which condemn his measures, apply only to what they deem political errors. With such incontestible proofs of an honest and able servant, as we have experienced in Mr. Hastings, let us not deprive ourselves of the services of such a man, for errors of judgment, or maxims of policy. His great abilities, his long experience, his respectable character amongst the natives, his profound knowledge of their government, language, and policy, his tried integrity, and his acknowledged services, are tests of merit, which we may safely appeal to, and by which we ought to be guided. In these we have a standard for our judgment, which is certain, and, therefore, as much superior to the fluctuating opinions of politicians, as experience is to speculation. I have the highest respect for the wisdom of many Members of the House of Commons, and particularly for that of the learned Lord, who brought forward the resolutions regarding your Government of Bengal; but they contain some positions which are as erroneous

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as the measures they condemn, and they afford an additional proof to the many we had before, that all the knowledge which can be acquired by the most enlarged mind, in the course of a Session of Parliament, is not sufficient to establish an infallible authority. On these resolutions, however, the House of Commons have come to one, which confirms the truth of an observation made by a member of that respectable body on another occasion, viz.—“ that our natural disposition leads all our enquiries rather to persons than “ things;” * for the only object that I can find out in this vote, is to desire the Court of Directors to petition his Majesty to remove Mr. Hastings. This, I own, has a novel appearance, for your Court of Directors are competent to prefer such a petition, without such a recommendation. If it be a mere intimation from the House of Commons of their desire to your Directors, I humbly apprehend they can take no more notice of it than of a request from the Treasury Bench; and, I trust, they are sufficiently informed of their duty, to know, that whilst they are bound by an act of the *whole* legislature, they cannot be controuled by only *one* branch of it. I do also conceive, that the House have descended from their own dignity, by such a recommendation. If Mr. Hastings hath deserved the censure of Parliament, the true constitutional mode of proceeding against him is by a bill. If he hath not done any thing to incur such a punishment, it surely was beneath the dignity of that august assembly, to vote a resolution which was little better than a request to the Court of Directors, and which they *alone* cannot enforce, if it should be refused. If the legislature at large think proper to remove Mr. Hastings, we must obey their power; but I hope we have spirit enough not to submit either to threats or tricks.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR,

* Vide Mr. Burke's speech, on presenting a plan for the better security of the independence of Parliament, &c. page 40, printed for Dodsley.

LETTER X.

THE important subject which hath so long excited our attention, is now upon the eve of determination; and Parliament will soon decide a question, in regard to the government of Bengal, with which our rights and interests are so intimately connected, that it would be treachery to ourselves to remain inactive.—The avowed principles of the Ministry are favourable to the claims of our charter; and if (as we have every reason to hope) they mean to guide their present conduct by their former sentiments, we may assure ourselves they will not act inconsistently with their professions.—They will not say we have a right to manage our own affairs, and yet deny us the exercise of that right; they will not say we ought to appoint and remove our own servants, and yet do both themselves; in short, they will not invade our privileges and insult our understanding.—But as we have had a recent instance, in the recall of a gallant Admiral in their own department, of the effects of prejudice and passion, we ought to be doubly fearful of the same consequences in our affairs;—and as the example is so clearly connected with our situation, as to make us apprehensive of its influence, it ought to warn us of our danger, and make us vigilant to avert it.—When we see that a warm imagination is soon heated into intemperance by interested tales and partial information, and that great talents are exerted to justify a misconceived opinion; it should teach us to guard against the fallacious reasoning

reasoning of the one, and the specious pretences of the other.

On these principles let us examine the conduct of the Secret Committee, and if we find that they have been misled in their own judgment, or are likely to mislead the judgment of others, it is a duty incumbent upon us to demand a hearing of the Legislature, and to assert our opinions in opposition to theirs.—The first idea which was entertained and propagated, was, that Mr. Hastings was the author of the Mahratta war ; and for this cause he was to be removed.—This opinion the Secret Committee soon destroyed by their report ; and another was taken up, that he should be removed for appointing the Chief Justice to the superintendency of the Dewanny Addaulet.—This hath been laid aside ; and his conduct with the Vizir Sujah ud Dowlah, in transactions that happened eight years ago, and on which judgment hath been passed, was made the subject of censure.—In what manner, and how unworthy the dignity of Parliament, this attempt to remove him was made, I have already hinted at, and therefore will not repeat the disgraceful circumstance. After all these various expedients, another is going to be tried, the effect of which we shall soon know. But let the event of this measure be what it may, it ought not to alter our conduct. We have one decided rule to guide us, let Parliament act as it pleases ; — and that is, to contend for the right of appointment and dismission of our own servants, or to relinquish the trust altogether. As an individual of the society, I can have no doubt of what I must lose ; and I am clear, that my first loss in selling out will be less than what I must suffer, if the appointments which are talked of should take place.

If there be any part of the conduct of Mr. Hastings which the Legislature think so wrong, that he ought to be removed,

removed, and the three Estates concur in such a resolution, we must, as in duty bound, submit. If the charge be fairly brought, and impartially debated, as in such a case we doubt not it will, the warmest advocates of Mr. Hastings will not remonstrate. And therefore as such a resolution must be the act of the united wisdom of this nation, in which no interested views or passionate prejudices can have a share; we may hope, that if the same wisdom is exerted in appointments as well as dismission, the same care will be taken of your interests in the one as in the other. Report, however, gives us reason to entertain a different opinion; and as the report is currently circulated, and generally credited, we ought not to be regardless of it.

It hath been asserted very publicly, that Mr. Hastings and the whole Council are to be recalled, and the persons to be appointed in their room are to be Sir George Young, General Smith, Mr. D. Long, and Mr. William Burke. If this assertion should be founded in truth, what are we to think of the motives of recalling Mr. Hastings? and what recompense are we likely to find for the loss of approved merit and tried integrity? I feel a repugnance to enter into invidious comparisons of personal merit; nor will I follow the unworthy example of drawing forced inferences from assumed principles; but I will not hesitate to declare, we deserve to lose our rights if we tacitly submit to *any* set of men being forced upon us without our consent: and I do also declare, that unless I see the most candid conduct pursued in the removal of Mr. Hastings, and the most disinterested choice in a successor, I never will believe that either the national interest or your's is consulted by such a change.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

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L E T T E R XI.

SO many motives conspire to fix your attention on the proceedings of the House of Commons relative to your affairs, that I cannot suppose the most indifferent person hath not maturely considered the consequences of the resolution, which passed on Tuesday last, on the motion of the Lord Advocate, and surely no person can have reflected on these consequences, without being seriously alarmed—the question is now no longer whether you shall have the appointment of your own servants, but whether one branch of the Legislature, shall do what belongs to the whole, and whether you shall interfere in the management of your own concerns ? It is now no longer a point, that affects merely the character and conduct of individuals in your service ; it is become an argument of constitutional power, and of public concern, in which though your rights are immediately struck at, yet those of the whole community are remotely affected.

It was asserted in the House of Commons that the Proprietors had nothing to do with the recall of Mr. Hastings, but that it was a duty which appertained *solely* to the Court of Directors. The position as an absolute one, is not strictly true ; for though the law vests this power in the Directors, yet they have never exercised the unconditional Letter of it, but always supposed the spirit of it meant to include the will of their constituents : conformably to this idea of its intention, they appealed to them, on a former occasion, regarding Mr. Hastings, on another regarding Lord Macartney and so they do on every important event.

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LETTER XI.

The assertion therefore of the Court of Proprietors having nothing to do with this business, standing in opposition to the remark of one of the members, is not justifiable in the unlimited sense it was used, but, intending to convey the idea, that they ought not to be consulted, it is a dangerous and improper doctrine.

If the House of Commons mean to assert by their vote of Tuesday, that the Directors ought to recal Mr. Hastings, that they have a right to expect obedience to such a vote, and have a power to compel it, if it be refused; I humbly apprehend that such an argument cannot be supported on constitutional principles; for if this be granted, they may pass a vote to-morrow that we ought to divide only four per cent on our stock, which the Legislature limits at eight, and by the same parity of reasoning, they may go on to vote, that we ought to have no exclusive privileges at all. I therefore repeat, that if the vote has this meaning, it is unconstitutional, and not only the Proprietors, but every good subject ought to resist it, for the increase of privilege is as dangerous as the increase of prerogative, and a just exercise of the three estates is, the true constitutional balance of the English Government.

If the House of Commons mean to assert that the conduct of the Governor General hath been so improper that he ought to be removed, they should have stated the charge, and proceeded in a regular, constitutional manner by bill—but if they only mean to convey their sense of what is the duty of the Directors, I must agree with an honourable member of their own, that they have brought themselves into a situation, from which they cannot get out with credit, for I hope we have spirit enough, not to be dictated to on a matter, in which we have the sole right of judging, a right that every master of a family in England enjoys,

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a right which is as sacred as our property, and which, if we suffer to be invaded, we deserve to lose. The right of Parliament, even to the territorial revenue is doubtful, but it is the only one in which the three estates have any pretence to interfere—Shall we then submit to the mandate of *only one* of these estates, and that too on a point in which they have clearly no power? Much, as hath been said of the omnipotence of Parliament, I do not believe that the warmest advocates for the republican part of our constitution will venture to assert, that the House of Commons *alone* have a power to vote any resolution which may affect the right of the subject—Shall their votes controul my household? Shall they dismiss my servants, because they disapprove my conduct? Shall I, as an individual, resist such a vote, and will you in your corporate capacity tamely submit to it? Shall every drunken porter in Westminster make the walls of St. Stephen ring with his cries for right, till the licentious sound is hailed the voice of God? And will so respectable a body as the East-India Company remain quiet spectators of an invasion of those privileges which it is the boast of an Englishman to preserve from the attack of either King, Lords, and Commons, whilst we have the exclusive right of trading to the East-Indies, and of ordering and managing the governments in that country? Let us exert that right, and suffer no interference. If the Legislature think proper to take away that right, let them do it, and take the responsibility and the risk along with it; but let us not have our servants garbled, and be made cyphers ourselves, to gratify the passions, the prejudices, or the interests of any set of men.

AN INDEPENDENT PROPRIETOR.

June 3, 1782.

G

LET-

L E T T E R S

TO THE

Right Honourable EDMUND BURKE.

L E T T E R I.

SIR,

IN the following letters, I do not mean intentionally to give you offence;—and as you are generally acknowledged to be a man of great urbanity, I hope my freedom will not displease you.

I was a witness on Wednesday evening, of the very unfortunate dilemma to which his Majesty's ministers were reduced, when Mr. Secretary Fox proposed a vote of thanks to that gallant veteran, Sir George Rodney.—It was but a few days before, Sir, I saw you so remarkably active in bringing forward the St. Eustatia business, that you even quitted your favourite employment in the East-India Select Committee, to attend to it.—You best know, what motions would have been brought forward against Sir George Rodney if this glorious news had not arrived so opportunely.—I think, with Commodore Johnstone, that the brave Admiral's former services should have screened him against such an attack, and against an abrupt recall, or rather removal from his command;—for, Sir, not all the ingenuity of your friend, Mr. Fox, will be able to persuade a sensible public, that a recall, however qualified, is not a disgrace

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in time of war—as such, it was most assuredly, as you well know, intended.—I wish this, Sir, may induce you, and the rest of his Majesty's ministers, to be a *little more cautious* how you remove men in high and important commands from their stations. How the attempt, which was made on Thursday last, to remove Mr. Hastings, Sir Eyre Coote, and many others from their stations in India happened to fail, you perhaps can by this time account for. Be assured, Sir, the East-India Company will not willingly part with the services of such men at this most critical time, even though it should be intended to supply their places with Sir George Yonge, General Richard Smith, Mr. Dudley Long, and your relation, Mr. William Burke, the Agent to the Raja of Tanjore. In various resolutions of the Secret Committee the conduct of Mr. Hastings has been mentioned in the warmest terms of approbation.—The epithets, seasonable, wise, just, prudent, spirited, and proper, have been applied to various acts of the Supreme Council, which were proposed and carried by the casting voice of the Governor-General; and when the late resolutions were voted, upon which it was meant to effect his removal, had the Court of Directors obeyed the mandate, the only word which implied a doubt of Mr. Hastings's honour was agreed to be expunged.

ASIATICUS.

LETTER II.

THE very active part which you have taken against Mr. Hastings, since the commencement of the present session, and the ardour with which you still pursue the investigation of his conduct, induces me to offer a few more

observations to your consideration. I do this, Sir, from a sincere belief that you are a man of honour and integrity ; and that in the prosecution of this important object, you are biassed by no private views whatever. You have most unaccountably mistaken the real character of Mr. Hastings, and you deem it a point of duty, to procure his dismission from the government of Bengal. It has been proved, that the Mahratta war did not originate in Bengal. Mr. Hastings has been, it is true, censured for his conduct in the Rohilla war ; but in commencing it, he was not biassed by any interested views, except for his constituents, who were relieved by it, from that state of bankruptcy, to which the politics of your friend, General Smith, had reduced them but a few years before. During the course of the war in the Carnatic, and the negotiations with the Nizam, the conduct of Mr. Hastings is said to have been wise, reasonable, just, prudent, and spirited ; taking, therefore, the whole of the subject into consideration, and seriously reflecting upon the consequences of removing such men as Mr. Hastings and Sir Eyre Coote, the Court of Directors certainly acted in conformity to the duty which they owe their constituents, when they refused to carry into effect that resolution, which you so strenuously, and I dare say, conscientiously supported. I own, Sir, I tread upon tender ground, when I presume to hazard opinions upon parliamentary questions. I wish not to give offence, and perhaps one branch of the Legislature may be competent to dictate to the East-India Company. If indeed your assertion was admitted, that the Directors wish to remove Mr. Hastings, all difficulties would cease ; but I have every reason to believe, that a very great majority, both of the Directors and the Proprietors, would deem Mr. Hastings's recall at the present juncture to be the most unfortunate event

event that could befall them ; and they have great confidence in Mr. Fox's declaration, to preserve them in the exercise of their chartered rights.

Should the Governor-General be preserved from the present attack, by the firmness of his constituents, who have repeatedly and honourably supported him against the whole force of government : you are, I am told, going to bring forward a charge, which must, as you think, most effectually crush him ; I mean the busines of Benares, which you represent to be still more dishonourable than Sir George Rodney's at St. Eustatia. Your sentiments upon Mr. Hastings's conduct at Benares, you have explicitly declared in allplaces. The demand of money, which the Governor-General made upon the Raja, for the public service, although it had the previous concurrence of every member of the Supreme Council, and was afterwards approved of by the Court of Directors, with the knowledge, as I presume, of his Majesty's late Ministers, you term, upon all occasions, a shameful robbery. The requisition for cavalry, proposed by Sir Eyre Coote, and assented to by the Council General, at a time of real danger, you assert to be a gross violation of a solemn treaty ; with what degree of justice, I shall take leave to explain in my next letter.

ASIATICUS.

L E T-

LETTER III.

IN my last letter I presumed to point out to the Public the intemperate and unjustifiable heat with which you had invariably mentioned the unhappy affair at Benares. His Majesty's less prejudiced servants may perhaps entertain a very different opinion of it, when all the circumstances are fairly and candidly related to them. I know Mr. Hastings intimately, and I have seen a great deal of Mr. Burke in the last six months; nor will I allow, Sir, that your attention to those amiable qualities, justice and humanity, can exceed the Governor-General's.

By the treaty of Fyzabad in May 1775, the provinces of Benares and Gazypore were ceded to the East-India Company, by the present Vizier, Assophul Dowlah; they were at that time under the government of Cheyt Sing, a bastard son of the late Raja, Bulwant Sing, who had himself been confirmed and kept in the possession of these zemindaries by our influence. It was agreed that Cheyt Sing should hold them as a vassal of the East-India Company, precisely in the same manner as he had held them from his late sovereign the Vizier, to whom he had paid twenty-four lacks of rupees annually, and extra sums, in lieu of his quota of troops in time of war, agreeable to the constitution of the Empire. In my poor opinion, Sir, the question is simply this: Did we enter into an engagement with Cheyt Sing not to demand more than twenty-four lacks annually from him, let our exigencies be ever so great? If we did not, where was the injustice in our government,

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of demanding from Cheyt Sing less than a moiety of the sums he had paid to Sujah Dowlah? That such requisitions were made by the superior power in Bengal, appears from an authority which, I am sure, you will not dispute. Your friend, Mr. Francis, has informed us, that Alliverdy Cawn, during the Mahratta invasion, applied to the Raja of Purnea for money on account of the extra expence of the war, who immediately gave him an order upon his banker for twelve lacks of rupees. The Raja stood precisely in the same situation with respect to Alliverdy Cawn, as Cheyt Sing did to our government when the demand was made upon him.

Our army continued upon a peace establishment from May 1775 to July 1778: the Raja, of course, paid his annual tribute, and no more. When we received advice of a rupture with France, it was thought necessary to raise several new corps, in all twelve battalions; and Cheyt Sing was very equitably called upon by the unanimous voice of the Supreme Council to contribute his proportion towards this additional expence. The annual sum was fixed at five lacks of rupees. Mr. Hastings was directed to write to the Raja, and to assure him he should not be subjected to this extra payment after the conclusion of the war. Cheyt Sing reluctantly complied with the requisition. The transaction was related to the Court of Directors, who warmly approved of it. The second year, when there was a great probability of a change in administration in Bengal, Cheyt Sing positively refused to pay the money; but Sir Eyre Coote joining heartily with the Governor-General in support of the Company's authority, two battalions of sepoys were marched to his capital, and he then complied. The third year he again refused, and he accompanied the refusal by a declaration of his utter inability to pay

pay this sum any longer. Whatever impression the plea of inability may make in England, every man who has served in Bengal must know the falsity of it. By the most moderate accounts, Cheyt Sing became possessed of two millions sterling in specie upon the death of his father. The annual revenues of Benares, &c. are 75 lacks of rupees; and the Raja paid us 24 lacks annually the first three years, and 29 lacks from 1778 to 1781. If, therefore, the demand is founded upon justice and precedent, the plea of inability will at once appear false and evasive. The Raja had submitted to demands infinitely more oppressive when he was a vassal to Sujah Dowlah. Captain Harper has told your Select Committee last year, that the Zemindar of Bernares furnished assistance to the Vizier in time of war, as a matter of course. In short, I never heard the justice or the propriety of the demand called in question by any man, at all conversant in the constitution of the Mogul empire: yet you, Sir, are pleased at all times, and in all places, to term it a shameful robbery. I believe you are candid enough to allow, that Mr. Hastings or his friends have not profited by it. Sir, I applaud the goodness of your heart, but "you have passions that outstrip the wind." I hope, however, that the good sense and moderation of the English nation, already roused by the violent persecution of Sir George Rodney, (whose crime, I think, was robbery too in your idea) will prevent the British interests in India from falling a sacrifice to them. Every reasonable man, connected with the Company, is, I assure you, Sir, alarmed at your violence. To overset, in one moment, all our establishments in the East; to recall men who have retrieved our affairs, when reduced to the last distress, and when they were deemed desperate both at home and abroad; appears, at the first view of it, to be absolute

absolute madness. Yet such would have been the consequences, if the motion which you so warmly supported on the 16th had been cordially received at the India-House. It ran as follows : "That it is the duty of the Court of Directors to remove those men, in whatever degree employed, &c." including Mr. Hastings, Sir Eyre Coote, Mr. Wheeler, and almost every civil and military servant of rank in India.

In my next letter I shall take leave to relate the unhappy consequences of Cheyt Sing's intemperate and unconstitutional resistance.

ASIATICUS.

LETTER IV.

AS the unfortunate events which followed the refusal of Cheyt Sing to comply with the demands of the Supreme Council, are as yet but imperfectly related, I shall forbear any farther comments upon them for the present, except to observe that the letter which Cheyt Sing wrote to Mr. Hastings, was not a submissive one, and that if it is compared with the former letters of that Rajah, or of Bulwaut Sing to former Governors, it will be found that Mr. Hastings is justified in saying that it was offensive both in style and substance.—The severity which Mr. Hastings exercised to the Rajah, a Zemindar dependent upon our government, was not greater than that which the Supreme Council authorised Mr. Goring to exercise in 1775, to a person of infinitely superior rank — I mean the Begum, the widow of Meer Jaffier, and the guardian of the Nabob of Bengal.

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Mr.

Mr. Thomas Pitt has wisely said, that speculative opinions would ruin England.—If we carry your speculative opinions into practice, I am sure we have no claim to dominion in Asia; all our possessions there are usurpations undoubtedly; we gained India by the sword, and by the sword we must preserve it to this country. Not, Sir, that I am less inclined than yourself to justice, moderation, and good faith,—but we must sometimes submit to political expediency.—The gentlemen of the House of Commons, who ately voted against Mr. Hastings, have borne ample testimony to his integrity and splendid talents, — yet, instead of laying down a precise line for his conduct in future, they come to a resolution, that it is the duty of the Court of Directors to remove him, in order to deprive his constituents of the benefit of his talents hereafter. The unanswerable arguments of Commodore Johnstone had no weight with them, unless it were to draw from you that violent and unjustifiable declaration, that the Court of Proprietors had no voice in the removal of Mr. Hastings from the government of Bengal. I am a Proprietor, Sir, and no inconsiderable part of the small fortune I acquired abroad, is vested in East-India Stock. This declaration of your's, would, I confess, give me great alarm, were I not well assured that our present Directors will not attempt to move, in a matter of this importance, without consulting their constituents.—You have observed, Sir, that until Directors, Proprietors, and in short the whole nation shall get the better of avarice, we cannot hope for amendment. I confess this was an excellent sally, and the language is admirable from a man who has just jumped into the receipt of 4000l. a year, besides douceurs for the various branches of his family. But if we, who depend upon the receipt of our dividends for a subsistence, are to be deprived of it, in order to

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LETTER IV.

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carry your speculative opinions into practice, what is to become of us? I was, I confess, very well pleased with one declaration of your's, that no man who had been suspected of peculation abroad, or convicted of bribery at home, should fill a station of importance in India; I am now therefore perfectly convinced, that some gentlemen who have been publicly talked of for the government of Bengal, or as members of that administration, may give up all hopes of success—since they certainly come within that description of men, whom you have so justly pronounced to be improper persons to fill such honourable and respectable stations.

ASIATICUS.

H 2 G E N-

to be continued in the next number from our present
number.

To the PROPRIETORS of EAST-INDIA STOCK,

GENTLEMEN,

IT cannot but be matter of surprize to every impartial observer of public affairs, that the labours of two most respectable Committees of the House of Commons, exerted through many months with unabated ardour, should appear at last to have hardly any other object, than the removal of a Governor, or Governors, from some of the East-India Company's settlements. — The astonishment must be greatly increased, when it is remarked, that so much energy and such powerful engines, have not yet proved equal to the attempt. The task of affixing the stigma of culpability on an unblemished character becomes every day more difficult. Brilliancy of imagination, and fertility of argument, have rushed like a torrent through the House: shift, subterfuge, misrepresentation, and quibble, have almost carried our understandings by storm without doors; and yet the grand affair is still incomplete. — The delay of a week, of a day, of an hour, is felt on both sides — but with very different sensations. The friends of the Governor-General are convinced that the integrity, the wisdom, the humanity of that great man will, and must, sooner or later, be universally acknowledged, — and they flatter themselves, that every day gains them a new proselyte; hence their wish to procrastinate. Internal conviction is no less powerful on the opposite party, and actuates on their fears in a more than equal proportion. As the eyes of people gradually open, the private or partial, or unworthy views of certain interested men may at length glare out in their true colours; and the most complying spirits may in time grow tired of bowing

bowing to the gauze of patriotism, whenever it fails to conceal the deformity of personal ambition. Hence their almost indecent urgency of dispatch.

The two Committees, which for a long time were thought hostile to each other, have now joined issue, and seemed determined to keep up the ball of censure, by a perpetual repercussion of attack. The Select Committee, in examining the proceedings of the Court of Judicature in Bengal, discovers Mr. Hastings to have tampered with the independence and integrity of a Judge. Scarce has the accusation gone forth, when the necessity and policy of the measure in question is so accurately displayed, as to convert it to a most laudable effort for the public tranquillity. The learned Chairman from the Secret Committee brings up forty-four resolutions, some of fact, and many otherwise; but with no other ostensible object than that of criminating Mr. Hastings in his political department. Before he can get them through the House, their purport is canvassed without doors, and the principle of most of them refuted, from the very text whence they were drawn. The Select Committee then endeavour to mould into some shape an ill-digested mass of old and long-refuted charges, fished up afresh from one *Mr. Goring*. This stubborn embryo has not yet acquired the form or consistency of a Report; but whenever it shall appear, it will certainly undergo some discussions, not quite palatable to its parents and god-fathers. In the mean time, the game is held out by an artificial disposition of the imperfect fragments of a mutilated story from Benares. This arrived too late to constitute a component section of the sixth Report from the Secret Committee; but too opportunely, not to become a most valuable *rider*, or after-piece. The grand battery of forty-four resolutions was already opened, but the last piece was now to be new charged,

charged, and levelled, like that of a rifleman, point blank at the enemy's General : great part of its force lay in its precipitancy. On Monday, a new report and motion respecting the Benares business is promised in the House of Commons for the next Tuesday ; — the publisher takes up the whole of Monday night to print it ; — on Tuesday, out it comes, as a fresh Report, (being nothing but an abridged and avowedly imperfect statement of the behaviour of Rajah Cheyt Sing, Zemindar of Benares, in a short letter from Mr. Hastings, and another short letter from the Council-General of Bengal) and this phantom of intelligence (as if it were a full proof of delinquency) is followed up with a direct proposal for the recall of Governor-General Hastings, by a modification of the forty-fourth resolution. Thus is the Benares business, which every builder, who knew any thing of Asiatic architecture, would reject as a worthless pebble, become the corner-stone in the edifice of accusation. In plain terms, of all the various charges which have been exhibited against Mr. Hastings, his dispute with Cheyt Sing must seem to every man, acquainted with the principles and politics of Indian governments, by much the most frivolous. All the pains which have been taken by a great Patriot both in public and in private, to brand it with the stigma of a *robbery*, have been thrown away, — no less than another great Patriot's ridiculous renunciation of his share in the Company's dividend. Not a man who heard this imperious and disappointed bashaw in his ostentatious pretences to self-denial, and *pecuniary self-denial*, but laughed at him : none who knew any thing of his practices in India, or who have observed his egregious vanity and profusion, since his last return, (and which of us has not observed it ?) but were disgusted at the nauseous improbability. The spot for the fresh attack was therefore very wisely shifted.

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station of ‘robbery,’ besides being untenable, belonged to the other Committee; and appearances were much better preserved, by breaking ground on the subject of Cheyt Sing’s letter, by Mr. Hastings termed ‘disrespectful and unsatisfactory,’ by the learned Lord ‘an acknowledgment of slavery.’ Mr. Hastings has been upwards of thirty years in India; he has on many important occasions acted as Persian interpreter, while resident at the Durbar, under that great and good man, Governor Henry Vansittart: he is an equal proficient, and an experienced master in the dialects of poetical composition, and of political negociation in India. Shall he go to school to the Lord Advocate to be taught the style and implication of a Persian letter? Does the learned Lord understand an iota of its phraseology, or even of its character? Or does he pretend to the same intuitive knowledge and literary second-sight as hath enabled another great genius to discern at a glance, and to decide *ex cathedra*, whether a translated letter were originally written in English or in Persian? Such gigantic scholars carry before them the whole Encyclopedia of learning as easily as they carry the House of Commons! After all, it is more than probable, that if all the persons now in London, who have ever been in India, and who are conversant in the politics of that country, were called to the bar of that House, they would testify their clearest sense of the improper style and disrespectful insinuations applied in Cheyt Sing’s letter; at least it would be worth while to examine them. The acknowledgment of slavery implies about as much as if I should subscribe myself, ‘your most obedient humble servant,’ to the Lord Advocate.

Granting, however, for a moment, that the learned Lord’s position with respect to the style of Cheyt Sing’s letter, be admissible, he hath introduced a circumstance (if Mr.

Woodfall

Woodfall has done justice to his speech of Tuesday) which, when rightly stated, would totally change the nature of the question. " This letter," (says the noble Lord) " stated " the payment of a tribute which the Governor had no " right to demand, the impaling of several persons; and " concluded with an acknowledgment of slavery ; yet this " letter was termed insolent by the Governor, and accounted " *a cause for war.*" Under an idea that the Morning Chronicle must have imperfectly stated the learned Lord's speech, I cannot hesitate to pronounce positively, that *no such cause for war was ever accounted to exist.* The letter was termed disrespectful, and so it undoubtedly is, — and more disrespectful, from the taunting, ironical acknowledgment of slavery. It is also extremely prevaricating and unsatisfactory, (which surely the learned Lord will not deny) and was therefore deemed by the Governor a cause for putting the Rajah under an arrest. The subsequent massacre of two companies of seapoys, and three European officers, by the contrivance and orders of Cheyt Sing, was deemed by the Governor, and must be deemed by all the world, a very sufficient cause for war ; if the learned Lord shall choose to stile by the denomination of war, a species of hostilities which began in treason, and ended in rebellion. Cheyt Sing was not an independent Prince ; he owed the fealty of military service, or pecuniary commutation, to his paramount, the Company, or the Company's representative. His resistance was rebellion, his downfall a judicial punishment, not a hostile overthrow. It appears in evidence from Captain Harper, that he was forced, under the exigencies of state, to furnish troops to his late sovereign, Sujah ud Dowla. Immediate loss of fortune and life would then have followed the presumption of a refusal ; and the constitution of the Mogul Empire would have justified the execution. The

Company

Company is now in the place of Sujah Dowla; the Company's general lenity is an aggravation to the Rajah's insolence. Should he now be restored to power, it will be an encouragement, a commission to every native of Hindostan to revolt from our dominion, and a pledge for his security under a defeat; on this plea the whole affair turns. Had Cheyt Sing obeyed his arrest quietly, or rather had he given orders for the payment of what the Governor-General (by the feudal tenure of Cheyt Sing's Zemindary, and under sanction of the Company's assent) had a strict and clear right to demand; had he conformed with sincerity to the necessary regulations proposed for his conduct, the matter would have been fully settled in three days, to the satisfaction of all parties. What construction shall we now put on Cheyt Sing's inexhaustible pleas of inability, when we find, (as advices received two days ago specify) that 120 lacks from his treasures have been already remitted to Calcutta?

But it is now time to close my letter; I cannot do it without congratulating our self-inspired scholars on their knowledge of Persian, as well as on some more of their triumphs. But I must beg leave to observe, that it will require an additional degree of dexterity, to convince an independent Court of Proprietors of the necessity of Mr. Hastings's recall. The gentlemen know that I, as a mere private gentleman, should laugh at them, if they were to pretend, by a vote of the House of Commons, to urge the expediency of merely removing my footman from one garret to the next: much more, that the most powerful and most extensive corporate body in this kingdom, may, and can, and ought to set at defiance every attempt of this single branch of the Legislature, to domineer over their resolutions, or to interfere in the internal management of

heir domestic concerns. The very idea is an innovation on the principles of the British Constitution. If the House of Commons choose to recall Mr. Hastings, or any other man, let it be done fairly and with effect *by bill*, and consent of all the branches of the Legislature. I never heard that the House of Commons had any exclusive power or privilege of this kind. If the East-India Company be dissatisfied with the conduct of a Governor of their own, they need not solicit the assistance of the Commons; they are competent to do it in a legal and constitutional mode, nor do they want advice. The Court of Proprietors will feel collectively, what each member feels as an individual, that the value of their stock depends on the abilities and integrity of their delegated servants. If there exists a man more fit for the high trust of Governor-General than Mr. Hastings is, their own interest will make them quick-sighted to the discovery. But *that man* is yet to seek, and will, I fear, be long unsound, to the unspeakable mortification of

A PROPIETOR.

THE END.



T H O U G H T S.

CHEYT SING's preparations for revolt from the government of Bengal, will be found to have anticipated the time of the Governor General's departure from Calcutta. Acknowledgments of slavery in his mouth, but treason and rebellion in his heart. His expressions were never so servile and submissive, as after his arrest, at the very moment when two companies of Seapoys, with three European officers, were going to be butchered under his eye, and by his immediate orders.

What opinion had Cheyt Sing entertained of the Company's right, to demand additional tribute or auxiliary troops on the event of a war? Read his letters—Do they indicate a doubt of the legality, or propriety, or even moderation of the demand? No, they teem with pleas of inability only—such as the custom of all the foederal tenants, or tributary Zemindars, throughout Hindostan, renders fully warrantable. But he well knew the obligation, and hoped, perhaps, by his perpetual excuses, to tire out the patience of his masters, or to extort from their compassion some abatement of the assessment. The constant example of Shuja ud Dowlah's valid and enforced claims on his father, and the established practice of all India, could not leave a shadow of doubt on his mind respecting the full competency of the Council-General's powers.

The House of Commons comes to resolutions for the necessity of political forbearance in India, and for establishing the character of British moderation, good faith, &c. on a renunciation of all conquests, at the very moment that the members and the public are warmly congratulating each other on the repeated success of our arms over Hyder Ally and the Mahrattas.

What will the natives of India think of British moderation, when they see us thrusting out every European nation by turns from the Asiatic continent. They have been accustomed, indeed, to see us quarrel with the French, and have been frequent witnesses to our superiority—but how will they digest our treatment of the Dutch, who have proceeded on the uniform system of neutrality for more than 150 years, and have constantly afforded an asylum for all parties, natives or Europeans, in all the struggles and revolutions which have happened since that period? All India can bear strong testimony to the peaceable behaviour and unsuspecting tranquillity of the Dutch in that quarter; yet we seize their towns, plunder their property, and imprison their persons, without so much as a declaration of war—Such vigorous measures will probably insure the submission of our Indian subjects, but will hardly inspire them with a lofty opinion of our moderation. Asia has been ever ruled by the sword; and is now too far advanced in years to taste any other principles of government.

Rodney's

Rodney's recall was constitutional; it originated with the ministry, in whom lodged the executive power. Their right was never questioned, but the expediency of the measure has been much disputed. See how Mr. Fox reprobates the idea of an interference on the part of the House of Commons.—The Court of Directors holds the same relation to Mr. Hastings, with that of administration to Lord Rodney—nay more, a precise mode for removing the Governor-General is expressly provided by law, and the power vested in the Court of Directors by act of Parliament; where then is there room for the interference of the House of Commons? The line is at least as accurately drawn in the one case as in the other.

Many are Mr. Hastings's friends, and his enemies are many; but they both join in admitting his singular integrity, and all acknowledge the difficulty of finding an adequate substitute for him in the government of Bengal. Not one of them but is free to declare the insufficiency of each of those gentlemen, whose names are whispered as candidates for the succession. Nothing is so easy as to point out what men are unfit for the office and why. The doctrine of the day is, that the Court of Directors is competent to remove Mr. Hastings without any communication with the Court of Proprietors. The formal letter of the law, indeed, does thus word the position—but yet does not warrant the conclusion: For by the same law, a general controlling power over the Court of Directors, is lodged in that of the Proprietors; and the reason of the thing makes it evident, if law be the perfection of reason, as I have heard. For the Court of Directors is, in fact, nothing but a committee of Proprietors, a quorum for the dispatch of business. They are the first delegated servants of the Company, and as such, are accountable to the whole body for their conduct. Do not the Proprietors frequently exert the right of rescinding the resolutions of the Directors, and do they not after all possess that right.

The ministry now contend that to them belong the political measures of the Company; they claim all the power, and all the responsibility. The Chairman of the Court of Directors on Tuesday the 28th of May last, standing up in his place in the House of Commons, acknowledged the justice of the claim, and renounced as the head official servant of the Company all political responsibility whatsoever. Where is now the Company's independence?

No books, no theory, no recluse speculation will ever fit a man for the office of Governor General of Bengal; he must have abilities political and commercial, knowledge, local and experimental, acquired by long residence on the spot; he must not be inflexibly wedded to one undeviating mode of action, nor bigotted to any particular system of legislation. He should have judgment to discern where to temporize, and resolution to dare the invidious consequences of a great action. In short, he should know how to relax in every thing but integrity. The duty is of so mixed a nature, and comprehends so

many

many different relations with respect to Europe and India, it is so difficult to hold the balance in such a manner between them, as that what is serviceable to the one may not injure the other, that it is rather more extraordinary a man should ever have been found to hold the office with success during seven years, and more critical than the last, than that the difficulty of removing him should now be the cause of a thousand intrigues and machinations within and without doors. Were not the experiment too seriously dangerous for the Company and the nation, I should be happy to see one of these Governors-by-intuition put precisely into Mr. Hastings's place for a few years. I would only request to insert one article in the treaty ; that Mr. Hastings should previously stipulate, that he will not refuse after three or four years, to return once more and be the salvation of India.

Every man presumes to demand the government, particularly if he has ever been in India ; if he have but birth, or impudence, or a shattered fortune, he thinks himself entitled and well qualified for the post ; the Courts of Directors and Proprietors may, if they choose it, place the alternative of the Company's prosperity and perdition in such hands. But they would not employ a shoemaker who had not served a seven years apprenticeship. The time may come, when Indian affairs shall be so methodically and systematically arranged (principally by Mr. Hastings's long and successful labours) that any man of common understanding and common honesty may manage them : at present nothing less than uncommon talents and uncommon integrity will do the business. India is not yet ripe for your S—s and F—s. We must now have a man who can resist strong temptations, and who has other modes of shewing his contempt of money, than by squandering in every vain and profligate extravagance immense sums acquired with a very suspicious rapidity.

No man is blamed as a public character, for dedicating some portion of his time to his private affairs : It is even allowable for him to find the means of connecting his own personal interest with his official duty. But he only is truly great who has no time for himself, and who never admits *self-consideration* to go hand in hand with the business of the State. The illustrious Vasco de Gama, who first planted the Portuguese power in India, brought no acquired wealth from thence, but the first China orange-tree, a noble inheritance which he bequeathed to the European world.. Mr. Hastings, after having served thirty years in India, without a vice to gratify, or an extravagance to feed, is not now worth half the salary he has received by act of parliament for the last seven years. Mr. Francis, who has served somewhat less than those seven years, and with two-fifths of the appointment, is probably the richer man.

Mr. Hastings has acquired friends among those who know him by his great personal affability ; among those who know him not, by important actions. His character and his conduct only preserve their friendship, for he has never gratified any of them at the public expense.

pence. Even the regular road of promotion in the routine of the service hardly avails them; so cautious is he of furnishing matter for accusations, that he is unbiassed by private partiality in the line of his public conduct: for the same reason those who have acted with the most declared enmity towards him, have been permitted to enjoy every advantage procured for them by their less scrupulous patrons, that he might not seem actuated by a spirit of revenge. Look round among the Company's servants now at home. Those who exclaim the loudest against Mr. Hastings's politics, and are mingling *fas et que nefas* to supplant him, wallow in wealth obtained under his very nose. They are, indeed, at once the accusers and the proofs of his misconduct. Their acquisitions are a reproach to Mr. Hastings. The few who are called his friends cannot at best rise above an humble mediocrity, and the greater part are now soliciting to return to India for bread.

Lord Clive, with all his merit, had not the essential qualifications of a civil governor. Military habits never sit well upon commercial principles. His own glory and the Company's advantages were the result of the well exercised talents of a soldier. With a warmth of genius, a promptitude of decision, and a vigour of execution unknown in the annals of India, he was unfit for the tormenting details and formal minutiae of a peaceful administration, founded on a commercial basis. Mr. Hastings makes no pretensions to military merit, and yet he has never embarked in war but with a decisive success. Our armies have fought and conquered as often under his auspices as under Clive's command, and that with the disadvantage of a frequent change of generals. In the mean time civil arrangements have occupied much the greater portion of his time, and are infinitely the most valuable part of his administration. His economical plans have saved the Company immense sums. His political negotiations have procured them *de novo* much more. His encouragements have added to the mercantile gains of his employers, and his regulations to the prosperity of the state. In his time new manufactures have been brought to maturity, and the old to perfection: Mines of coal, iron, &c. have been worked to advantage; commerce and internal intercourse have been promoted, by rendering navigable many canals that were obstructed by sands and by new cuts where none before existed. The native languages of India have been printed on the spot, and the door thus shut on the general prosperity of the natives to forgery, without the necessity of a sanguinary penal law. Translations have been procured of all the most respectable and fundamental law treatises either in the Mahometan or Hindoo system, for the general direction of all judges in the country courts, and to the exceeding satisfaction of all the inhabitants. In short, industry has been infinitely encouraged, internal tranquillity effectually secured, and the commerce, the politics, the legislature, and the finances of Bengal improved within the last seven years, to so wonderful a pitch, that at present the very existence of the British empire seems on all hands to be allowed to depend on the preservation of her Asiatic influence.



LETTER V.

To the Right Hon. EDMUND BURKE.

SIR,

THE Swallow's packets being in part arrived, I shall take leave to renew my correspondence with you. You will soon receive the most ample and convincing proofs, that Cheyt Sing had entered into an engagement with the mother of the Vizier, and the Raja of Goorucpoor, to excite commotions in Oude, that he had promised a considerable sum of money to Futtu Shaw, to invade the province of Bahar; and that he had taken measures to assert his own independence, by collecting a very considerable army, and a train of artillery, with ammunition and military stores of every kind, and in great quantities, in the neighbourhood of Benares, previous to the Governor General's departure from Calcutta.—Mr. Hastings has indeed been culpable, not for severity to Cheyt Sing, but for a neglect of the repeated intelligence which had been sent him, of the preparation and hostile designs of the Raja.

The Chairman of the Court of Directors, Mr. Gregory, came forward at the last general Court of Proprietors, and acknowledged that Mr. Hastings had not wilfully detained in Bengal, those dispatches which ought to have been received by the Belmont. It appears by a note from the Secretary at Calcutta, that the direction of that packet having been accidentally torn off, it was returned to Fort William. With what violence did both Mr. Gregory and yourself dwell upon this subject in the House of Commons, a few days ago!—with what contemptuous indifference did you treat Mr. Barwell's honest attempts to explain this matter to the House! How did you in your Select Committee reject the assurances which Major Scott ventured to give you, that Mr. Hastings was superior to the low, paltry trick of with-holding any public

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act of his government, from the knowledge of the Directors? — Besides, in the instance alluded to, it would argue folly as well as indiscretion. Mr. Hastings had made a reform in the mode of collecting the revenues of Bengal, which would naturally subject him to much personal odium; was it to be supposed, therefore, that he would intentionally withhold his reasons for adopting a measure which, however beneficial to the Company, was destructive to the interest of several individuals? Neither this reasoning, nor the readiness of Major Scott, to furnish your Committee with copies of every paper in his possession, could conquer your prejudices: but I flatter myself, Sir, as the matter is now fully explained, you will join with Mr. Gregory, in procuring the Forty-Second resolution to be rescinded from the votes of the House of Commons; and if your report on the revenues of Bengal, confessedly drawn up from imperfect materials, is not yet completed, let me advise you now to compare Mr. Hastings's plan with its effects.

Mr. Wheler and Mr. Macpherson have spoke warmly of it in their public letter.

I have, I confess, Sir, been much at a loss to account for that more than common industry, which you have employed in your investigation of Mr. Hastings's conduct.—Pardon me, Sir, for presuming to observe to you, that I think you rather stepped beyond the bounds of moderation, when you brought forward Mr. Goring to the Select Committee, to give evidence upon a transaction, which happened in Bengal in the year 1775, and had been finally determined upon by the Directors, and the Court of Proprietors, in 1776.—Perhaps I may have formed an erroneous judgment of your motives, but I cannot help thinking Mr. Hastings has offended you by an opinion, which he has freely given, respecting the Raja of Tanjore, to whom, if I am rightly informed, your cousin, Mr. William Burke, is an avowed agent, with a fixed salary of eight thousand pounds per annum. Let me, Sir, take this opportunity of congratulating you upon his safe arrival at the capital of the Raja, and upon the gracious reception he met with. I presume Mr. William Burke did not take two trips over land to India, merely for the purpose of succouring “Virtue in Distress.”—What Mr. Hastings's opinion, respecting the claims of the Raja of Tanjore, and the Nabob of the Carnatic, has invariably been, shall be the subject of my next letter.

June 10, 1782.

ASIATICUS.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

To the Right Hon. EDMUND BURKE.

SIR,

June 12, 1782.

I HAVE presumed to hint that the principal cause of your persecution of Mr. Hastings, is the opinion which that gentleman has unfortunately entertained respecting the rights of the Rajah of Tanjore. The Governor General has unreservedly declared, that Tanjore being a dependency of the Carnatic, the Nabob, or the representatives of the East India Company at Fort St. George, with his consent, have an undoubted right, in the present distressed state of the Carnatic, to insist upon the Rajah contributing the amount of his revenues to the public service, after reserving the necessary sums for his private expences. This opinion is surely founded upon reason, justice, and common sense. I shall not quote all the unanswerable arguments which Mr. Hastings has urged in support of his opinion ; let it suffice in this place to observe, that the Governor General could have no private views to gratify, when he assented to the proposal of the select committee of Fort St. George, to compel the Rajah of Tanjore to contribute as far as he could to the support of the present arduous contest.

You will pardon me, I hope, Sir, for observing, that where the interests of the Nabob of the Carnatic, and the Rajah of Tanjore are in question, you cannot, nay you ought not to be considered as an unbiased, and an impartial judge.

In the year 1777, your cousin, Mr. William Burke, accepted the appointment of agent to the Rajah of Tanjore, with a salary annexed to it, as I am told, of 8000l. per annum. He arrived at Madras in September 1777, made a short stay there, returned to England, and last year made a second over land trip to Tanjore, where he has met with a most distinguished reception. Whether the Nabob has been ill used by the Rajah, or the Rajah by the Nabob, or (which I believe to

be the true state of the case) that both have been extremely ill used by the Court of Directors, it is not my business to enquire ; let impartial men determine the point in dispute. You certainly are a party in the business, in as much as you must naturally be anxious for the success of your cousin, the agent.

Let me intreat you, Sir, to be extremely cautious how you press the chairman of the Court of Directors, to send orders to Fort St. George, for overturning any regulations, which may have been formed for bringing a part of the revenues of Tanjore into our treasury, or a proportion of its grain into our magazines. That gallant officer, Sir Eyre Coote, has been prevented, by a want of provisions, from pursuing his victories. This is not a time for weakening the hands of our governments in India : It would surely be better at once to give up the contest, and to quit the Carnatic, if when that country is totally exhausted, the Nabob and the Company are not allowed to call upon a dependent Zemindar for assistance, without a violation of our national character for justice, moderation, and good faith.

May I, Sir, presume just to touch upon a subject nearer home. It is confidently asserted, but I profess I can hardly give credit to the assertion, that your relation Mr. William Burke has lately been appointed pay master or commissary to his Majesty's forces in India, with a salary of 1900l. per annum. This post, I can assure you, Sir, is as completely useless as any one of those which, in your economical bill, you propose to reform ; nay, were it necessary at all, I humbly conceive, Mr. William Burke's Tanjore agency would incapacitate him, from performing the duties of it. As a proprietor of the East-India stock, I do hope the Company will not be saddled with the payment of this useless office ; and as a British subject, anxious to see that plan of reform take place, which has been so faithfully promised, I cannot but lament, that a new post should be created, to add another two thousand pounds to the annual income of your family. I must do you the justice to say, Sir, that considering the short time you have been a minister, you have not been inattentive to your own, as well as to the national concerns.

ASIATICUS.

LETTER

To you Sirs I am of opinion that it is indeed too
late now to call off the bill, and to have a new one
passed.

LETTER VII.

To the Right Hon. EDMUND BURKE, and
Brigadier-General RICHARD SMITH.

I IMAGINE your speeches upon Mr. Dempster's motion, on Thursday, must have been grossly misrepresented in the public papers. Did you really say, Gentlemen, that Sir Elijah Impey's refusal to accept a salary to the appointment of the Adault, did not tend at all to his exculpation? and that probably his refusal was owing to his knowledge of your Committee having been instituted? To the last I can only declare, that when the salary was offered to Sir Elijah Impey, no intelligence whatever, respecting your Committee, had arrived in India. If I were to judge, Gentlemen, from the pains which both of you took to draw from Major Scott a declaration, that Sir Elijah Impey had accepted a salary, I should suppose, you deemed it of some consequence to establish that fact. Mr. Burke examined him closely for above three hours upon that single point. I confess, when I consider the very candid manner in which Major Scott answered every question that was put to him, and the eager inclination he shewed to give your Committee every information in his power, I could not help being surprised that you should examine him so much in the style of an Old Bailey witness; but when I saw a slip of paper upon the table of your Committee, with words to the following purport upon it, and in a hand I well knew, my astonishment vanished:—“ By a private letter from Calcutta, “ of the 9th of January 1781, it appears, that the business “ of the salary was done.” Considering the *very respectable quarter* from which this information came, I no longer wondered that you questioned Major Scott so closely. From that time to the present, however, I understood, and I am sure the report (which by Generel Smith's account is to immortalize Mr. Burke) tends to prove it, that the acceptance of the salary, which is taken for granted, was the criminal part of Sir Elijah's conduct. I do most firmly believe, that when the House voted an address to the King, to recal Sir Elijah Impey, they conceived he had accepted a salary, and that if the evidence which has now been produced, had then appeared, no such vote would have passed; but I may be mistaken—Governor

nor

nor Johnstone is said, by the papers, to have accused you of shameful partiality, and to have added, that when you wanted evidence to criminate a man, you were ready enough to search records, letters, &c. Far be it from me to take such a liberty with men of your exalted stations; but allow me to relate a plain fact, in plain language.

Three days after the arrival of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr. Francis, in Calcutta, they attacked the public measures of Mr. Hastings. In three months they told the Directors, that there was no species of peculation of which the Governor General, had not been guilty, and that, in less than thirty months, he had amassed a fortune of 400,000*l.* Mr. Goring was deputed to Moorshedabad to procure such proofs as might justify these assertions. None, however, were obtained. The matter was fully examined by the Court of Directors and Proprietors in 1776, when the whole force of government was exerted to remove Mr. Hastings. At that time he was supported by the late Marquis of Rockingham and Mr. Burke's particular friends, but he owed his preservation to the weight of his own personal character. All good men lamented the violence to which two most respectable persons, General Clavering and Colonel Monson, had been drawn, and this business lay dormant from 1776 until the other day, when Mr. Burke thought proper to bring Mr. Goring before the Select Committee. I hope the world, will one time or other, be favored with an account of his examination, and Major Scott's remarks upon it; but if it does not appear in the next Report, I shall take leave to relate it as accurately as I can from memory, for I attended to the whole examination very closely. Perhaps Governor Johnstone might have alluded to this transaction; I shall not however, presume to determine, whether bringing Mr. Goring before a committee of the House of Commons in 1782, to examine him upon points that the East India Company had pronounced judgment upon in 1776, did not look very like personal persecution. I must do General Smith the justice to say, that he was indisposed when Mr. Goring first appeared before the Committee, and that I believe he disapproved of it.

Let it be remembered that on that remarkable day, when the House of Commons resolved "that it was the duty of the Court of Directors to remove Mr. Hastings, &c." not a member spoke to the resolution, without declaring that the abilities of the Governor General were of the most splendid kind, and his integrity unquestionable.

For the MORNING HERALD.

LETTER VIII.

Mr. EDITOR, August 9, 1782.

IN a late paper it was asserted, that the idea of removing Mr. Hastings, and of punishing East-India delinquents, was given up by Lord Shelburne. Upon reading this paragraph, I could not restrain my inclination to send you a connected narrative of the treatment which Mr Hastings has met with from the House of Commons, and an infatuated majority of the Court of Directors. His conduct has been arraigned by two Committees, who certainly were formed for purposes far different. The first, the Select Committee, met last year, to take the state of the judicature in Bengal under their consideration; at the commencement of the late session, their powers were extended, and they were directed to enquire, by what means our valuable possessions in Bengal, &c. could be best governed. Far be it from me, Sir, to arraign their proceedings: I do assert, that no man living can be more anxious than Mr. Hastings is, to have his conduct fairly and fully investigated: whether the investigation which the Select Committee entered into was a candid one, let their reports determine: Commodore Johnstone has publicly accused the Committee of gross and scandalous partiality—the charge was denied,—was it refuted?—The Secret Committee was appointed to enquire into the cause of the invasion of the Carnatic; but when the Lord Advocate first came forward in the House of Commons, the major part of his resolutions were pointed against Mr. Hastings, for acts done many years ago, most of them approved, some condemned, but himself acquitted by his constituents from every suspicion of being actuated by a corrupt motive, in any one transaction of his government. The two Committees cordially co-operated with each other: the grand object with each appeared to be the removal of Mr Hastings. The Secret committee, in an early stage of their enquiry, had discovered the absolute necessity of sending Parliamentary Supervisors to India;—the Select Committee, that three of their own body, General Smith, Mr. Rouse, and Mr.

Dudley

Dudley Long, were admirably calculated to succeed Mr. Hastings, Mr. Macpherson, and Mr. Stables. The Lord Advocate, after laying the resolutions of the Secret Committee upon the table of the House, moved for a day for voting or rejecting them; but Major Scott, the Agent of Mr. Hastings, having humbly represented to him the impropriety of voting these resolutions, before the reports on which they were supposed to be grounded had been printed, the Advocate was pleased to put off the consideration of them for a fortnight. In the mean time, General Smith moved the recal of Sir Elijah Impey, and declared he should have moved the recal of Mr. Hastings also, had he not understood that a motion to that effect was to be made by the Lord Advocate from the Secret Committee. At last, Sir, the important moment arrived—the Lord Advocate was ill, and absent;—after some private conversation between Mr. Burke, General Smith, and Sir Adam Ferguson, the latter brought up the famous forty-four resolutions of the Secret Committee: from the gallery I could count but twenty-six Members in the House, most of them belonging to the two Committees: the resolutions were read and voted, with this remarkable circumstance, that the only word which could be supposed, even by a forced construction, to convey a personal reflection upon Mr. Hastings, was expunged. Sir Adam then proposed, as a 45th resolution, “that it was the duty of the Court of Directors, to recal those persons whose conduct had been censured.” This was also carried, although Mr. Robinson, Member for Canterbury, remarked, with peculiar emphasis, that the House was rather empty, considering the importance of the resolution they were about to come to. It passed, however; and was carried on the following day to the Directors by General Smith and Sir Henry Fletcher. On that day there was a Court of Proprietors, who received the resolution for Mr. Hastings’s recal with such evident marks of surprize and discontent, that although it had passed in a Committee of the whole House, it never was reported to the House. On the 28th of May this resolution, under a new form, was again brought forward by the Lord Advocate, who declared, when he proposed it, that the abilities of Mr. Hastings were of the most splendid kind, and his integrity undoubted. Mr. Fox made a similar declaration. Mr. Powys, Mr. Hussey, and, in short, every Member who spoke on that remarkable day, Mr. Burke and General Smith excepted, acknowledged the abilities and the integrity of Mr. Hastings, in the most expressive terms: but, upon the mistaken idea that his ambition was boundless, it was

was resolved, "that it was the duty of the Court of Directors to remove him." Mr. Burke was then in office, and he appeared bent upon procuring Mr. Hastings's removal, with a solicitude as earnest, and a vengeance as unrelenting, as he had so recently displayed in the persecution of the gallant Lord Rodney, on the evidence of two Jews, and a Swiss. All opposition was therefore vain; the friends of Mr. Hastings did not divide the House, which consisted of 43 Members; but Commodore Johnstone plainly told the Ministers of that day, if they were determined to remove Mr. Hastings, *that* was not the way to do it—the Directors would not obey a resolution of one branch of the legislature. Mr. Fox forgot himself so far on that occasion, from a desire to oblige his friend Mr. Burke, as to declare, that if the Directors should refuse to obey a resolution of the House of Commons, they ought to be impeached: yet did I hear this same Mr. Fox, *this consistent Statesman*, assert, a few days afterwards in the debate upon Mr. Rigby's balances, that all the world knew a resolution of the House of Commons was of no effect—that no man, or body of men, was bound to pay obedience to it! How shall we reconcile this declaration to Mr. Fox's proposed impeachment of the Directors?

The resolution thus passed, was sent to the Court of Directors; but they were prevented from proceeding upon it, by the interference of the Court of Proprietors, who have declared that they will give up their charter, rather than consent to the removal of Mr. Hastings until some ground of delinquency can be proved against him. An enquiry into his conduct has commenced at the India-House. Under this enquiry, his friends are perfectly easy; they wish to promote it to the utmost of their power, being fully convinced that an unprejudiced Court of Proprietors will find it to have been, what the Secret Committee of the House of Commons declared it was upon several very critical occasions, wise, spirited, prudent, just, and proper.

Mr. Fox, in his famous speech in the House of Commons, has said, that there were other causes of difference between Lord Shelburne and himself, "that Lord Shelburne wanted to screen some East-India culprits." If Lord Shelburne was averse to the removal of Mr. Hastings in the present most critical state of the Company's affairs, I avow, that he acted the part of a wise minister, and an honest man!

ASIATICUS.

For the MORNING HERALD.

LETTER IX.

MR. EDITOR.

IN the letter which I addressed to you a few days ago, I concisely, and I hope impartially, related the steps taken by the two Committees of the House of Commons, to remove Mr. Hastings from the government of Bengal: I shall now trouble you with a few remarks on the conduct of the Gentlemen in Leadenhall-street, first however observing, that all men who are conversant in the affairs of the East-India Company, or interested in its prosperity, must recollect, that during the time the Secret Committee was sitting, it was repeatedly asserted, by many anonymous writers, "that Mr. Hastings "was the author of the Maratta war." Mr. Francis has said in his pamphlet, that Mr. Hastings's denial of this fact, would be received with universal astonishment. In reply to this assertion, Major Scott publicly avowed, that Mr. Hastings would be warranted in having made that declaration, by the reports of the Secret Committee. Those, with the appendix to each, make two very large volumes in folio; I mean those reports only which contain the rise and progress of the Maratta war; but as I fear, Mr. Editor, few men will search for truth amidst such a mass of matter, I shall rest the propriety of Major Scott's assertion; upon a declaration which fell from the Lord Advocate himself:—"that the Maratta war originated in "Bombay, and was encouraged and approved of by the Court "of Directors." The Lord Advocate was induced to make this confession, by Mr. Powys having declared it to be his opinion, "that Mr. Hastings was not the author of the Maratta "war." Although he was freed from this burthen, there were other parts of his conduct which induced the House to determine,

mine, " that it was the duty of the Court of Directors to re-
" move him."

It was thought proper, on the 20th of June, to call a General Court of Proprietors, for the express purpose of taking this vote into consideration ; so respectable a meeting had not appeared at the India House for many years : the subject was fairly and ably argued, notwithstanding the attempt of an illustrious lawyer to divert the attention of the Proprietors from the important object of their deliberation. The conclusion which the Court came to was decent, just, and proper :—
" that to remove Mr. Hastings, merely in compliance with a
" vote of one branch of the Legislature, without being first
" convinced of his delinquency, would be to give up the in-
" dependency of the Company." It was further resolved,
" that no steps were to be taken respecting his removal, with-
" out a previous communication to the Proprietors."

I speak with tenderness, and without resentment, of the respectable Gentleman who lately filled the Chair of the Direction ; but surely, Sir, there was a strange absurdity in the conduct of this business from the first to the last. That Gentleman had been an active Member of the Secret Committee ; he consented to, he supported the mode adopted for effecting Mr. Hastings's removal ; but when he spoke behind the bar at the India House, he said, " To be sure a vote of one branch of the Legislature is not to influence the Directors ;"—yet he was in the House of Commons, Sir Henry Fletcher was there, and I believe Mr. Wilkinson too, when Mr. Fox made that unconstitutional declaration, that if the Directors did not conform to the vote of the House, they ought to be impeached.

I think, Sir, if I had had the honor of sitting in Parliament, of being a Member of the Secret Committee, and a Director of the East-India Company, and had been conscientiously of opinion, that Mr. Hastings ought to be removed, I would have resorted to the true constitutional mode of effecting it ; I would have assisted in bringing in a bill for his removal ; but I never could have joined in voting that it was my duty, and the duty of my brother Directors, to remove him for acts, on which we had already passed either censure or approbation. A moment's reflection will convince any reasonable man upon what different principles an enquiry at the India House, and in Parliament, must be carried on : the latter may commence their enquiry at any period they think proper ; but can the former, with propriety, do so ? The limits of this letter will not allow me to enter so fully into this subject as I could wish ; but I will endeavour to explain myself in a few words : the Secret

Committee censure Mr. Hastings for with-holding the King's tribute, and for his concern in the Rohilla war. For the last transaction, Mr. Powys was of opinion Mr. Hastings should be recalled. It was, however, commenced and ended in six months of the year 1774, and the Proprietors pronounced judgment upon it in 1775. The stoppage of the King's tribute, under all the circumstances which attended it, was highly approved of: yet the House of Commons state these acts, amongst others, as grounds for resolving, "that it is the duty of the Court of Directors to remove Mr. Hastings." If any new lights can be thrown upon the former transactions in Bengal, it is undoubtedly the duty of the Court of Directors to reconsider them, otherwise their decision has already gone forth, or they have been grossly negligent of their duty. They constantly receive advices from Bengal, and of course answer the letters they receive: the Directors can therefore finish their enquiry very shortly, since they have only to consider those advices which have arrived subsequent to the close of their last dispatches. Had they thought Mr. Hastings unworthy to remain in their service, they might have removed him by an address to the Crown, nor would he have been favoured by his Majesty's late Ministers. But so far was his conduct from subjecting him to such a disgrace, that in looking over such of the Company's general letters as are printed in the sixth report of the Secret Committee, I find great commendations bestowed upon him, for his negociations with the Nizam, and for the manly, decided, and spirited exertions, by which he preserved the Carnatic.

I cannot conclude this letter without observing, that integrity and abilities may be serviceable to a man, even in these degenerate days. Mr. Hastings, an unconnected individual, without borough influence, or an overgrown fortune, but merely by the weight of his personal character, hath been able to defeat the attempts of one branch of the Legislature, and of a popular Administration to remove him from his government. Let it be remembered, that Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox strained every nerve to carry this point when they were Ministers of this country; when they possessed a great share of popularity, the former by his reputation for disinterestedness, and the latter acquired by his positive and unequivocal declaration that he could make peace with America, and would engage to do it, even though Lord North was the Minister, provided the negotiation was committed to him. If others of his Majesty's ministers were inclined to think more favourably of Mr. Hastings, as Mr. Fox has insinuated, they certainly sacrificed their inclinations to preserve

preserve unanimity in the national councils, for Mr. Hastings was preserved by the virtuous efforts of a great majority of his most respectable constituents, by men *who could have no private views to gratify*, who had never been in habits of intimacy with him, and to most of them, he was not even personally known. To their everlasting honor let it be observed, that they would not consent to give up a man, who had faithfully and successfully served them two-and-thirty years, because Mr. Burke, in the hour of his greatness, had determined it should be so. Of that gentleman's knowledge in India politics, they had some experience. He obtained a qualification in 1781, and attended upon party questions for a month or two. We can all of us recollect, how he confounded the Krishna, the Coleroon, and the Ganges, and what gross ignorance he betrayed of the common rules of the service. The knowledge which he has since acquired, has enabled him to discover, that, to save the Company, we must dismiss the ablest British subject in India from our service.

Much hath been said, and great use was artfully made, of the first imperfect accounts which were received of the late revolution at Benares; a compleat narrative of that affair, written by Mr. Hastings himself, has lately been received at the India-house. I trust, that narrative will be laid before the Proprietors, and to the judgment of his constituents, and the public at large, Mr. Hastings contentedly, and with pleasure, submits his conduct throughout that critical transaction.

August 13, 1782.

ASIATICUS.

For

For the MORNING HERALD.

Mr. EDITOR,

A WRITER who calls himself *Asiaticus* seems a violent panegyrist of the present Governors of Bengal; he probably finds it convenient to be so; if he confined himself to his idol, his worship should be never disturbed by me, but when he reflects on others, who to my certain knowledge are as far superior to that fortunate monarch of Bengal as a learned parson is to an illiterate parish-clerk; I can't forbear animadverting on it.

Mr. Hastings, like many others employed in that great *Monopoly*, was luckily in the way to preferment when fortune presented two Ministers, who by dint of sound and solid reasons have procured him the strongest patronage he could wish, whereby, and by means of the distracted state of this unfortunate country, he has ruled the roost near twelve years in Bengal; his fortune, so far from not being overgrown, is known (though perhaps not to this essayist) to be immense; as to his negotiation, refer to his concessions to the King of Cultac, his appointment of a crack-brain'd European (moorishly mad) to the command of Bengal reinforcement sent to the Carnatic after the brave Bailey's defeat, which took ten months to march one thousand miles; and to his last affair with Cheyk Sing at Benares, the most bungling affair that ever was concerted. In India, the Black Hole, and Patna massacres sink to nothing when compared with it, and let Mr. H. and his abettors do their utmost to conceal that, and the dreadful famine at Madrass, occasioned by Salt Agencies, and other selfish unfeeling motives: there are those, who disdaining falsehood and flattery, will give the truth to the public, which sure no honest man, or friend to his country, can take amiss.

If you think proper to publish this, you may hear more from

August 17, 1782.

A CONSTANT READER.

LETTER

FOR THE MORNING HERALD.
LETTER X.

Mr. EDITOR,

IN Reply to a Letter signed *A Constant Reader*, I beg leave to observe, that as the writer has not attempted to controvert a single fact contained in my former Letters, a very few words from me will suffice.

I do not know, Mr. Editor, that I have reflected upon a single individual. It is true, indeed, I have been under the necessity of mentioning the names of Mr. Fox, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Burke, General Smith, Sir Henry Fletcher, and the lately elected Director, Mr. Wilkinson. Does he mean that these Gentlemen, or any of them, are superior characters to Mr. Hastings? It is well known they endeavoured to the utmost of their power to remove him from the Government of Bengal; but can he tell me, why they did not pursue the only constitutional mode of effecting it. after Commodore Johnstone had candidly assured them, that the resolution which *they had forced through a very thin House* would be opposed in Leadenhall-street? I beg leave to ask this writer what patronage has been procured for Mr. Hastings, or by whom? Was he not supported by his constituents the Independent Proprietors of East-India stock? Could this support have been purchased by money? The writer says, Mr. Hastings's fortune is known to be immense, yet adds in the same line, that he knows nothing of the matter. The severest enemies of Mr. Hastings in Parliament, and at the India-house, have borne ample testimony to his integrity and abilities. Here, then, I shall rest this point until some proof shall be produced, that his fortune is enormous. I shall barely observe in reply to the facts which are stated, that Colonel Pearse was six months, not ten, in marching to Madras; that he would have been there in four, if he had not halted by orders from Sir Eyre Coote; that so far from Mr. Hastings causing

causing a famine at Madras, Lord Macartney, and his Council, acknowledge in the warmest terms in their letter to the Court of Directors, that they had received the most effectual assistance and support from Bengal; that they had been amply supplied with men, money, and provisions, by the Supreme Council. The narrative of the late transactions at Benares is at the India-house; it is, or ought to be open for the inspection of the Proprietors, who will form their own judgment upon it.

August 19, 1782.

ASIATICUS.



